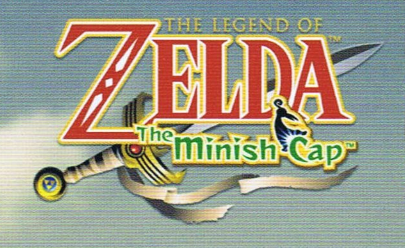

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RANDOM COLLECTION
Bacon sculpture Marcus Hawkins
marcus.hawkins@futurenet.co.uk
Chutney mongoose Paul Edwards
paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk
Babooshka alibi Martin Kitts
martin.kitts@futurenet.co.uk
Courgette thong Geraint Evans
geraint.rhysevans@futurenet.co.uk
Albino syrup Miriam McDonald
miriam.mcdonald@futurenet.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS
Mark Green, Jes Bickham, Richard Broughton, Daniel Vincent, Graham Dalzell, Andrew Mills, Ian Steadman

PRODUCTION
Super Senior Co-Ordinator Kirsty Bell
Production Manager Rose Griffiths
Purchasing Manager Michelle Rogers

CIRCULATION
Product Manager Russell Hughes
Subs Manager James Greenwood

ADVERTISING
Advertising Director Jayne Caple
Advertising Manager Darren Gratton

MANAGEMENT DESK
Publisher Kerry Lawrence
Publishing Director Mia Roberts
Editorial Director Jim Douglas
Overseas Licensing Simon Wear

SUBS & DISTRIBUTION
Future Publishing Ltd, FREEPOST BS4900, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7BR.
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HAPPY NEW GEAR!

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
To see the hardcore Nintendo action slammed into this **NGC**!

For UK Nintendo fans, 2005's getting off to a surpisingly pacey start. The British debut of DS is only a matter of weeks away, while Gamecube and GBA both have inventive first-party titles to help you work up a sweat in the ice-cool February days – the Donkey Kong-driven *Jungle Beat* and *King of Swing* respectively. And then there's the imminent release of the all-ravaging *Resident Evil 4*. Genuinely uplifting stuff, and proof again that where Nintendo gaming's concerned it's quality, not quantity that counts (let's be honest, we haven't got much choice).

January also brings changes for **NGC**. Sadly, Mim's decided to move on (there's only so much of Paul's poisonous gut-stench that a girl can take). We won't forget her though. Actually, we can't – Geraint's insistence on pretending she's still here during team photo shoots means she'll never be allowed to leave. Once Nintendo's in your blood, it's hard to let go.

Enjoy the issue. We did.

Team NGC
NGC@futurenet.co.uk

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WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

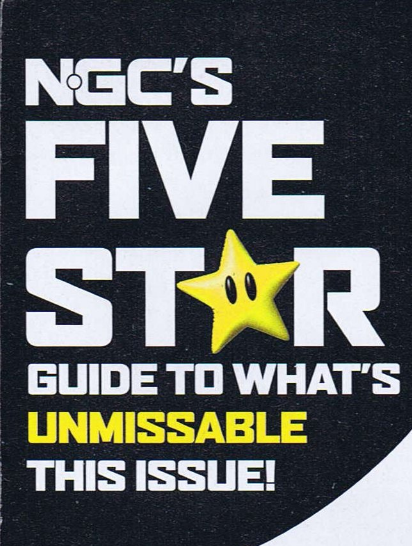
NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 12 years of Ninty love right there.



1 PAGE 13

2005 PREVIEW

RAMMED!

A whole 12 months of 'tendo 'tainment coming your way.

2 PAGE 54

DONKEY KONG

JUNGLE BEAT

One small tap for a platformer, one giant drumroll for platforming kind. Erm…

PAGE 13

2005!

You've got a bumper gaming year ahead of you – look at this lot…



MEET ENJiKi

Enjiki's a mascot for the team, a fine example of the truth that with good looks you don't need to have talent or work hard to get ahead in life. Unluckily, the rest of the team are a gang of gargoyles, so a lifetime of toil is their lot. Meanwhile, Enjiki sits in her beautiful person's chair, waited on hand and foot, wondering what all the fuss is about… witch.



3 PAGE 33

4 PAGE 14

RESI 4

THIS IS A LOCAL SHOP! Leon's adventures with the freaky villagers are almost upon us. Take one last sneak preview before release.

5 PAGE 26

THE FUTURE OF POKÉMON

'MONWARDS, UPWARDS What can Nintendo do to breathe new life into the monster mash?

WHAT'S IN NGC?

Enough to keep you busy for weeks…

PREVIEWS

Amazing new games coming your way





NEWS

The latest rumours, truths and goings-on

EXTENDED PLAY

Getting more from your favourite games

REVIEWS

Ways to blow your hard-earned cash



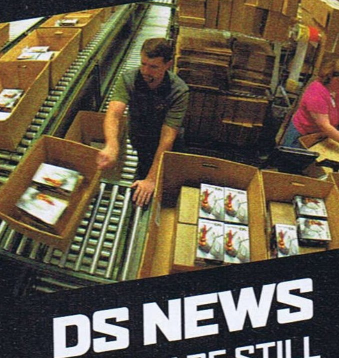
NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH

UNITY CANCELLED
ARE YOU SURPRISED? P8

NEW GAMES
THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2005 P13



DS NEWS
SALES ARE STILL CLIMBING P34

AND MORE...

YOUR NEW YE

YOUR GUIDE TO THE FIVE BIGGEST NINTENDO EVENTS OF 2005.



1 DS LAUNCH

WHEN?
Mid March… probably… (nudge, nudge, wink, wink)

IMPORTANT BECAUSE?
It's a new piece of hardware – and the most important piece of hardware Nintendo have released in years. Like a wild animal marking its turf, Nintendo need to stamp their authority on the last remaining territory where they're dominant. PSP is a very real, very aggressive challenger for the handheld throne and DS, for want of a better analogy, is going to have to spray up one big stink in order to drive it off.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?
DS sales are going through the roof in Japan and the United States, but, in our opinion, in the hands of Nintendo of Europe's merry band of marketeers nothing is a safe bet. They need to get units out into the hands of the public. With DS, to touch is to know, and anyone who puts hand to stylus will fall in love with the machine. Backed up with a strong visual campaign (the US adverts were particularly good) and an aggressive price (charging anything above £110 would be a travesty) Nintendo will stand a good chance against Sony's superior and more persuasive marketing skills.

2 RESIDENT EVIL 4

WHEN?
March

IMPORTANT BECAUSE?
It's the biggest third-party event in Gamecube's history – we know because we've got it. Capcom have an astonishing game on their hands and, crucially, it's that much-longed for 'mature' game (well, as mature as it can be when you're running around blowing heads off bad monks) and the kind of system-seller that may convert the great unwashed to the cause of Gamecube… maybe. It's not a Gamecube exclusive any more, but it's got a good year's head start on the PS2 version and, more than likely, will be technically superior.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?
The worrying thing here is that Nintendo will be taking over publishing duties in Europe. You're probably well aware of our opinion of Nintendo of Europe's marketing prowess by now, so you'll understand our concern.

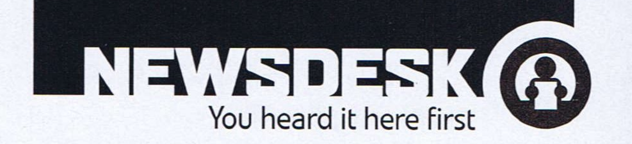
In the States, Capcom have spent a colossal amount to ensure it reaches over 170 million consumers, flooding TV, radio, magazines and even bombarding Times Square in New York with ads.

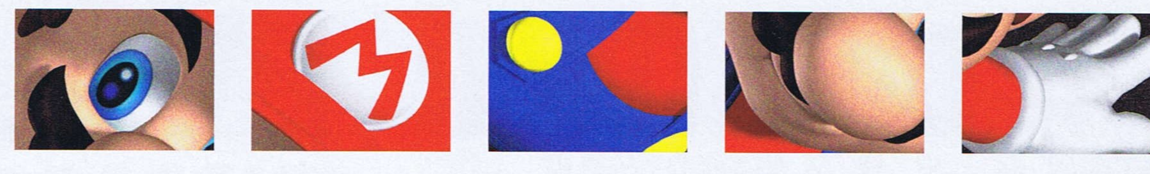
Obviously we don't expect as big a push over here, but for goodness' sake Nintendo, let's get the game seen by the public. Show people the *actual game* in motion, don't let it slip into obscurity like you did with *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*…







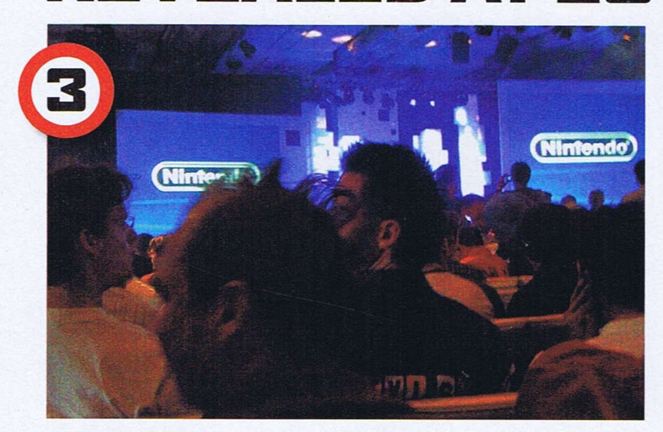




AR STARTS HERE!

REVOLUTION REVEALED AT E3

3



WHEN?
May

IMPORTANT BECAUSE?
This is *the* most important event for Nintendo and the one thing they absolutely have to get right. They'll be unveiling their brand-new console – the machine which, according to their press releases, is a console like no other and will 'revolutionise' the way we play games.

One of the more interesting rumours to emerge recently is that it won't feature the traditional D-pad and A and B buttons. Nintendo have already said that DS is a hint at what they're planning, so expect an entirely new kind of control method. Touch screen, voice recognition, motion sensing? Whatever, it seems highly unlikely that Kittsy's prediction of "clench-sensitive rubber paddles" that you grip with your "teeth and buttocks" will ever surface as a practical interface, but our money's on it being the last thing you'd expect. Shigsy-style.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?
We really hope Revolution will be so different that it truly distances Nintendo from Sony and Microsoft's more predictable and traditional consoles. Theirs are getting bigger and faster, but nothing's really changing, and that mean's the floor's open for Nintendo to innovate. Can they come up with something as revolutionary as their N64 controller – with a revolutionary game (like *Mario 64* was) to go with it?

What about other announcements? Can we expect to see GBA 2 mentioned? And what about *Mario 128*? Both have been mentioned in the past, *Mario 128* quite recently, so don't be surprised if we see *something* on the plumber's mysterious game. If they pulled that out of the bag it would be a guaranteed show-stopper. Traditionally, the pre-E3 press conference is the place where big announcements are made and Nintendo need to pull off as aggressive a show as they did when Reggie Fils-Aime famously kicked "ass" and took "names". Nintendo need to do something similarly bold and confident again, and make absolutely sure they get the new Zelda playable on the show floor afterwards – otherwise people will smash the place up with murderous intent…


△ Mayhem inevitably breaks out when a new console is unveiled.

POKÉMON GC

4

WHEN?
Late this year. Hopefully.

IMPORTANT BECAUSE?
Nintendo still haven't grabbed the bull by the horns and delivered what everyone has wanted since Pokémon came on the scene – a proper home console RPG. Pokémon, while still relatively successful for Nintendo, isn't quite the phenomenon it used to be. So it's high time it came back to the fore, emptying wallets at 20 paces and turning cold, steely-eyed profit into the coal that drives the pistons of the Mario and Zelda love engines. Pokémon still has the potential to be massive; all it needs now is a bit of effort from the big N.


△ Ooh, stick you, Pikachu!

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?
We're not going to go on for too long about this as there's a whopping feature on this very subject starting on p.26. True, an online element would be ideal, but we can't see that happening. What we really want is a huge adventure, with an original and engaging story – and hopefully, something a bit different from the monotonous battles and hours of wading through grass. We just want something a bit different that can carry on the legacy of this once-great franchise, and this very first shot shows that we may well be in for something of a treat…

NEW ZELDA

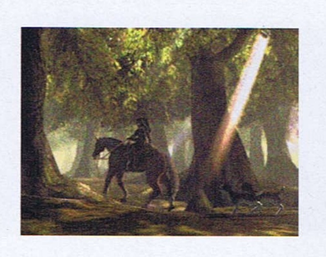
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WHEN?
God willing – Christmas 2005

IMPORTANT BECAUSE?
See what Nintendo have got for us this Christmas? See it? No? That's because there's *nothing there. Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*, you say? Well, strangely enough, Nintendo of Europe seemed to want a very low key launch – let alone suggest it was, in terms of quality, on the same footing as its rivals. With Gamecube entering its twilight years this year it's imperative it goes out with a bang. As far as we know Zelda will be the last big first-party game –and it needs to leave a lasting impression.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?
To be honest, we have no earthly business telling Nintendo how to make Zelda great. With the exception of the god-awful *Zelda 2* (reviewed in NGC Pocket this month, on p.47) they're perfectly capable of delivering earth-shattering success all on their own.

Still, we're going to stick our oar in anyway. Please, please, *please* may we have a full orchestral soundtrack for the next Zelda? And it'll be nice if, this time around, we aren't left with the sneaking suspicion that a couple of dungeons had been left out last minute. We want something of a similar magnitude to *Ocarina*, with the brooding, twisted undertones of *Majora's Mask*. Cheers.





MORE 2005 ACTION FROM P.13…

EA TAKE OVER THE WORLD

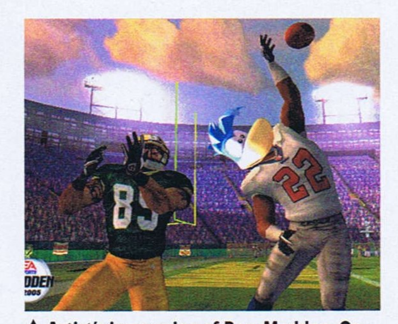
Mopping up smaller companies like a super-absorbant game-sponge…

The National Football League (the American Football equivalent of FIFA) have granted EA exclusive rights to the NFL license. That means teams, player names, stadiums, the lot. It's a huge deal in the States as it means that no other companies can come close to competing with EA when it comes to making American football games. Notable casualties will be Midway's respectable NFL Blitz series and Sega's (actually *very* good) ESPN games.

Granted, that probably isn't of too much interest to us over here, but a recent piece of news may be far more wide-reaching. EA have bought a 19.9% share in French publisher Ubi Soft. Ubi have been pretty prolific and consistent in their output of high-quality and original content over the past year, with *Splinter Cell*, and *Prince of Persia* being just two examples. EA's interest in the company is due "to the strength of its studios and brands," say Ubi Soft, adding "We're in the strongest position amidst all publishers to meet the challenge of the transition to next generation consoles."

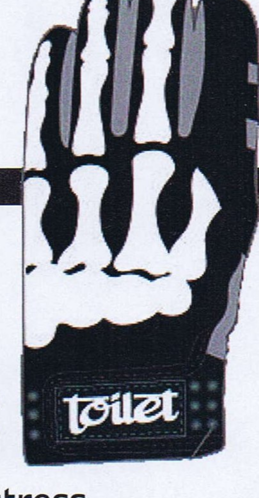
"Without further information from EA on their intentions and agenda, this operation is considered as hostile," said a Ubi Soft spokesman.

Hopefully this doesn't mean we'll have to kiss goodbye to the kind of memorable games that we've been lucky to enjoy this generation, like *Beyond Good & Evil* and *XIII*. Still, the thought of *Ray-Madden 2005, Tom Clancy's Need for Speed Underground 3* and *Prince of Persia: Street* is certainly… interesting.



△ Artist's impression of Ray-Madden. Or should that be Rayman-den? No. No way.

EVIL THREADS



Capcom dress to distress…



See those lovely 'Bone Gloves' oddly branded as 'Toilet' around the wrist? They're part of the *Resi 4* clothing collection in Japan. There's actually far nicer stuff available (like a leather jacket for a cool £200) but as sweet as they look, they're no where near as amusing as the black Toilet Gloves – hence the inclusion of them here. If you're feeling particularly flushed and want to spend some Christmas readies on some unique clothing (seriously, there's some quite nice stuff on offer) head on over to http://www.capcom.co.jp/bio4 for more details.

On the subject of smart *Resi 4* gear, peripherals manufacturer Nubytech are set to release this 'interesting' looking chainsaw-shaped controller soon after the game arrives in Japan. Savvy collectors (or serial Ebay abusers) would do well to keep an eye on http://www.residentevilcontroller.com for the final release date…



NBA NINTENDO ALL STARS?!

Slam-dunk Yoshi's bum eggs…



This latest rumour stems from an image (pictured) on the US' EBGames website. It shows the box art for the forthcoming *NBA Street V3* and, if you look closely at the top left-hand corner, it seems to suggest that Mario and his cohorts will make a cameo appearance. At the time of writing, there's been no official confirmation from either EA or Nintendo on the matter. Still, just the *thought* of seeing Mario and friends, chavving themselves up with branded sportswear and bling is enough to make us want the universe to fold in on itself through sheer horror alone.



UNITY CANNED





Ever the cynic, Kittsy actually predicted such an event no sooner had the game been revealed. In fact, if memory serves us correctly, he used the word 'doomed' – which doesn't really do much to ease our very real disappointment.

Speaking on his forums about the fact that his psychedelic, sound-based shooter had been cancelled, Jeff Minter had this to say. "It's been a horrible decision for us to have to make, but in the end we've had to make it… realistically it was becoming unlikely that it'd be finished in time for anyone to want to publish it on Gamecube. The alternative would be a rush job and we simply didn't want to do that. Best to call it a day."



NO ONE THROWS BABY OFF THE CLIFF!
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and me...
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and me...
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...unless there's something in it for me!
MY HEADS ON WONKEY
and me!
...but it's just as fun with one
Nintendo

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Nintendo system game in development – updated monthly!

UK RELEASES

The most accurate listing available – although be aware that slippages can occur. All titles Gamecube unless otherwise stated.

JANUARY

28	It's Mr Pants (GBA)	Rare/THQ
28	NFL Street 2	EA

FEBRUARY

4	Donkey Kong Jungle Beat	Nintendo
4	DK: King of Swing (GBA)	Nintendo
4	UEFA Champions League 2005	EA
17	NEW ISSUE OF NGC ON SALE TODAY!	
18	Advance Guardian Heroes (GBA)	Ubi Soft
18	NBA Street V3	EA
25	Banjo-Kazooie Pilot (GBA)	Rare/THQ
25	Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ
25	Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies (GBA)	THQ
25	Mario Power Tennis	Nintendo
25	The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie	THQ
25	The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie (GBA)	THQ

MARCH

1	Smashing Drive (GBA)	ZOO
4	Ghost Recon 2	Ubi Soft
4	TimeSplitters Future Perfect MOST WANTED	EA
11	FIFA Street	EA
11	Kao the Kangaroo: Round 2	JoWood
11	Robots	Vivendi
11	Robots (GBA)	Vivendi
18	Mario Party 6	Nintendo
18	Resident Evil 4 MOST WANTED	Capcom
TBC	Asphalt Urban GT (DS)	Ubi Soft
TBC	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	Atari
TBC	Fairly Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown	THQ
TBC	Fairly Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown (GBA)	THQ
TBC	Mr Driller: Drill Spirits (DS)	Namco
TBC	Nintendo DS (Hardware)	Nintendo
TBC	Pokémon Dash (DS)	Nintendo
TBC	Project Rub (DS)	Sega
TBC	Rayman DS	Ubi Soft
TBC	Ridge Racer DS	Namco
TBC	Spider-Man 2 (DS)	Activision
TBC	Sprung (DS) (working title)	Ubi Soft
TBC	Super Mario 64 DS (DS)	Nintendo
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams (GBA)	THQ
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: BattleNexus	Konami
TBC	The Urbz: Sims in the City (DS)	EA
TBC	WarioWare Touched! (DS)	Nintendo
TBC	Zoo Keeper (DS)	Ignition

APRIL

1	Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom
TBC	LEGO Star Wars (GBA)	Eidos

MAY

6	Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories (GBA)	Nintendo
TBC	Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (DS)	Ubi Soft
TBC	Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (GBA)	Ubi Soft

SPRING

Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django (GBA)	Konami
Fight Night 2005 (working title)	EA
Killer 7	Capcom
Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	EA
Metroid Prime Hunters: First Hunt (DS)	Nintendo
Winnie the Pooh Rumbly Tumbly Adventure	Ubi Soft
Winnie the Pooh Rumbly Tumbly Adventure (GBA)	Ubi Soft

SUMMER

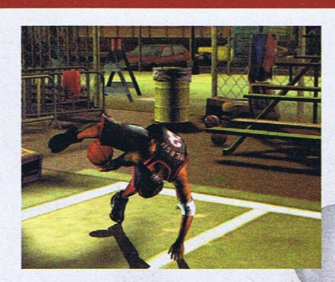
Batman Begins	EA
Batman Begins (GBA)	EA
The Incredible Hulk	Vivendi

TBC 2005

Advance Wars DS (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Advance Wars: Under Fire	Nintendo
Alien Hominid	O~3
Animal Crossing (DS) MOST WANTED	Nintendo
Another (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Atari Classics (DS)	Atari
Baten Kaitos	Namco
Bionicle 2 (GBA)	THQ
Boktai (working title) (DS)	Konami
Bomberman (DS)	Hudson
Caduceus (DS)	Atlus
Castlevania (working title) (DS)	Konami
Codename: Kids Next Door (GBA)	Take 2
Custom Robo	Nintendo
Dora the Explorer: Super Star Adventures (GBA)	Take 2
Dragon Ball Z (DS)	Banpresto
Dragon Booster	Konami
Dragon Booster (DS)	Konami
Dragon Quest Monsters (working title) (DS)	Square Enix
Dynasty Warriors (DS)	Koei
Egg Monster Heroes (DS)	Square Enix
Fantastic Four	Activision
Final Fantasy III (DS)	Square Enix
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles (working title) (DS)	Square Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo
Frogger 2005	Konami
Frogger 2005 (DS)	Konami
Funkydilla	Zoonami
Game Zero (working title)	Zoonami
Ganbare Goemon (DS)	Konami
Geist	Nintendo
GoldenEye: Rogue Agent (DS)	EA
Harvest Moon (DS)	Natsume
Jam with the Band (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Jump Superstars (DS)	Nintendo
Kirby Adventure (working title)	Nintendo
Lamborghini FX	Avalon
The Legend of Zelda MOST WANTED	Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda DS (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Madden NFL 2005 (DS)	EA
Mario Baseball	Nintendo
Mario Kart DS MOST WANTED	Nintendo
Mario Party Advance (GBA)	Nintendo
Mega Man Battle Network (DS)	Capcom
Meteos (DS)	Bandai
Mobile Suit Gundam Seed (DS)	Bandai
Monster Rancher (DS)	Tecmo
Moonlight Fables (DS)	Majesco
The Movies	Activision
Nanostray (DS)	Majesco
Need for Speed Underground (DS)	EA
Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King (GBA)	Buena Vista
Nintendo Puzzle Collection	Nintendo
Odama	Nintendo
Oggy and the Cockroaches (GBA)	Telegames
One-Line Puzzle (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
One Piece (DS)	Bandai
Pac'n Roll (DS)	Namco
Pac-Pix (DS)	Namco
Ping Pals (DS)	THQ
Pokémon Diamond (DS)	Nintendo
Pokémon GC MOST WANTED	Nintendo
Pokémon Pearl (DS)	Nintendo
Puppy Times (working title) (DS) MOST WANTED	Nintendo
Puyo Pop Fever (DS)	Sega
Rave Master: Special Attack Force (GBA)	Konami
Retro Atari Classics (DS)	Atari
Robots (DS)	Vivendi
Room Zoom: Race for Impact	Jaleco
Secret of Mana (DS)	Square Enix
Snowboard Kids DS	Atlus
Sonic DS (working title) (DS)	Sega
Space Raiders	Taito
SpongeBob SquarePants (DS)	THQ
SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Star Fox Assault MOST WANTED	Nintendo
NEW Super Mario Bros (DS) MOST WANTED	Nintendo
Super Princess Peach (DS)	Nintendo
Survival Kids (DS)	Konami
Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf 2005 (DS)	EA
Touch! Kirby's Magic Paintbrush (DS)	Nintendo
Ultimate Brain Games (DS)	Telegames
Ultimate Card Games (DS)	Telegames
Ultimate Pocket Games (DS)	Telegames
Vandal Hearts (working title) (DS)	Konami
Viewtiful Joe (DS)	Capcom
Virtua Quest	Sega
WINX (working title) (DS)	Konami
World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco
World Soccer Winning Eleven Series (working title) (DS)	Konami
Yoshi's Universal Gravitation (GBA)	Nintendo
Yoshi's Touch and Go (working title) (DS) MW	Nintendo
Yu-Gi-Oh! Destiny Board Traveller (GBA)	Konami
Yu-Gi-Oh! Nightmare Troubadour (DS)	Konami

US RELEASES

The most important US releases to import…




JANUARY

22 **NFL Street 2** EA

FEBRUARY

8 **NBA Street Vol. 3** EA
14 **Star Fox Assault** Capcom
14 **WarioWare Touched! (DS)** Nintendo
15 **Mortal Kombat: Deception** Midway

MARCH

1 **Geist** Nintendo
14 **Donkey Kong Jungle Beat** Nintendo
14 **Pokémon Dash (DS)** Nintendo
14 **Yoshi's Touch & Go (DS)** Nintendo
21 **WarioWare Twisted! (GBA)** Nintendo
TBC **Atari Classics (DS)** Atari
TBC **Mario Party Advance (GBA)** Nintendo
TBC **Pac Pix (DS)** Namco
TBC **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory** Ubi Soft

APRIL

1 **Killer 7** Capcom
25 **Pokémon Emerald (GBA)** Nintendo

JUNE

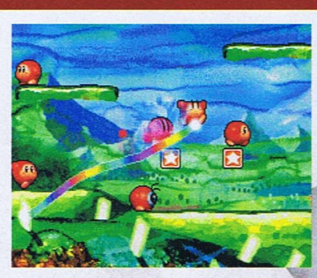
6 **Fire Emblem** Nintendo

TBC 2005

Advance Wars: Under Fire Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda Nintendo
Odama Nintendo

JAP RELEASES

Big name Japanese future hits.




JANUARY

20 **Bouken-Ou Beet: Busters Road (GBA)** Bandai
20 **Terminator 3** Atari
27 **BioHazard 4** Capcom
27 **Catch! Touch! Yoshi! (DS)** Nintendo
27 **Ganbare! Dodge Fighters (GBA)** Bandai

FEBRUARY

3 **Super Robot Taisen Original Generation 2 (GBA)** Banpresto
24 **Chaos Field** Sega
24 **Meteos (DS)** Bandai
24 **Rockman EXE 5: Team of Colonel (GBA)** Capcom
24 **Star Fox Assault** Nintendo

MARCH

1 **Jinsei-Game DS** Atlus
1 **Snowboard Kids DS** Atlus
3 **Choro Q DS** Atlus

SPRING

Doubutsu no Mori DS (Animal Crossing DS) Nintendo
Killer 7 Capcom
Nintendogs (DS) Nintendo
Touch! Kirby Mahou no Efude (Touch! Kirby Magic Paintbrush) (DS) Nintendo

TBC 2005

Bura Bura Donkey (GBA) Nintendo
Caduceus (DS) Atlus
Chibi Robo! Bandai/Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda Nintendo
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes Nintendo
Yoot Saito's Odama Nintendo

NGC MOST WANTED

The top ten games we're dreaming about right now (and in some cases, playing)…



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA NINTENDO

There wasn't a dry eye in the office the day we held our DSs aloft, fired up our favourite instruments in *Daigassoi Band Brothers* and gave a mesmerising performance of the Zelda theme. Our neighbours on Edge, PSM2 and GamesMaster Magazine couldn't believe their ears. Just wait till they *see* all-new GC Zelda. They'll think their eyes are on the blink…

IN A NUTSHELL: The best looking Gamecube game. Fuill fricking stop.



2 RESIDENT EVIL 4 CAPCOM

Four times the fun of the original game? As long as its pleasure-giving potential is matched by its size. Although there seems to be a fair amount of replay value in there (revolving around finding all the hanging blue medallions in the game to unlock Resi treats), we'd still ike to see a one-player campaign that keeps on giving as a standalone experience.

IN A NUTSHELL: The game everyone's talking about.



3 STAR FOX ASSAULT NINTENDO

The Namco-developed intergalactic-critter death-fest takes another step up our Most Wanted ladder of love. It's out in the US and Japan in February (following the lead of DS and Resi, it'll launch in the States first), but there's still no confirmation of when exactly it'll scorch Europe with its vermin-chicken-toad mixed grill. We fools reckon it'll be April…

IN A NUTSHELL: A return to form for Star Fox. We hope.



4 MARIO KART DS NINTENDO

Come on – it's going to be great. A return to single-rider karting, the chance to take on your real-world rivals over a wireless network, some classic Mazza Kart courses and… well, we'd bet on the odd mini- or battle-game that makes creative use of the touch screen just to justify its existence. Eat our shells, Edwards! And again! And again!

IN A NUTSHELL: It kart come soon enough! (Can't come soon enough.)



5 ANIMAL CROSSING (DS) NINTENDO

For such a quiet game, *Animal Crossing* has some of the most vocal supporters going. Mim, Geraint – both of them wibble on constantly about how the DS version, with its wireless link-up and the opportunity to be in a town with other player at the same time, is "going to rock bells". Or is that what Paul says? Constantly.

IN A NUTSHELL: An absolute bell-rocker.



6 TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT EA

Heard the one about Free Radical being charged with developing the next James Bond game for EA? While nothing's been confirmed (and global megasofts "never comment on rumours or speculation" anyway), we think that'd be one of the wisest creative decisions EA have ever made. In the meantime, we get to 'make do' with new 'Splitters…

IN A NUTSHELL: The acceptable mainstream face of time-hopping first-person fun?



7 (NEW ENTRY) NEW POKÉMON NINTENDO

Nintendo are working on a brand-new 3D Pokémon for Gamecube. From what we've seen, it doesn't look too much unlike *Pokémon Colosseum*, with both human characters and 'Mon looking healthy and well-fed. There'll be a new lead character again too.

IN A NUTSHELL: Balls at the ready – the monster-baiting collect-'em-up's back…



8 (RE-ENTRY!) PUPPY TIMES (DS) NINTENDO

Think dogs stink? Not allowed a pet? Bored of scooping up the evacuated arse-biscuits of a real hound? Then start saving for *Puppy Times*, which puts you in control of a puppy-dog-eyed puppy without the stench or hassle associated with real thing. Tickle his belly, throw him a frisbee, rub his nose in his spent mess – fun for all the family.

IN A NUTSHELL: Dog-ownership sim that makes smart use of the DS touch screen.



9 (NEW ENTRY!) NEW SUPER MARIO BROS (DS) NINTENDO

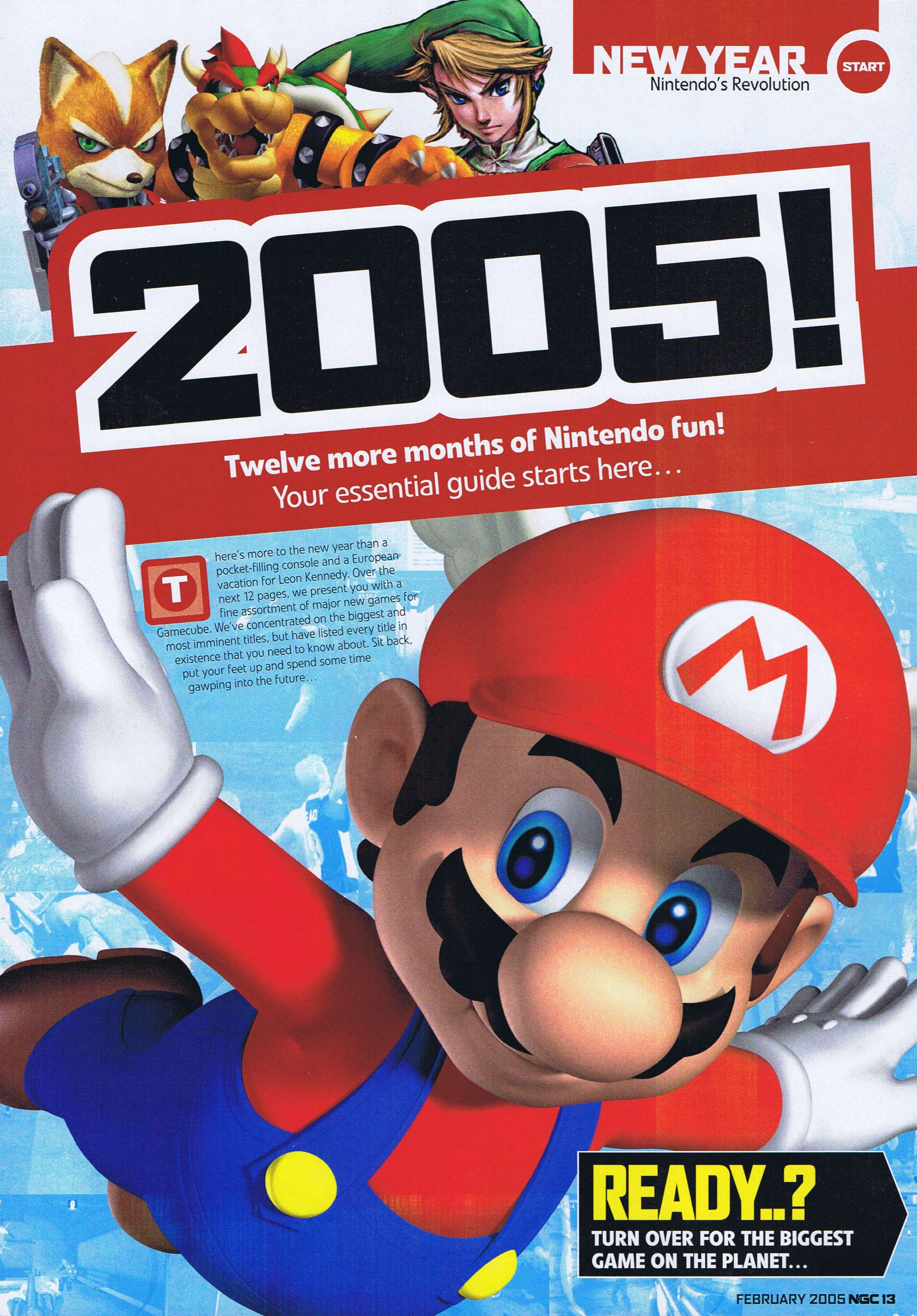
One of Geraint's hot picks, is this. A traditional side-scrolling butt-slammer, but with 3D objects and a polygonal Mario that can inflate to fill the whole of one screen. So, classic gameplay brought bang up to date with some neat effects – but we're sure it'll be much more than that (Nintendo are keeping its secrets locked down at the moment).

IN A NUTSHELL: The same but different.

10 (RE-ENTRY!) YOSHI'S TOUCH & GO NINTENDO

Baby Mario and Yoshi are back, in the epic tale of one excessively-tongued dinosaur's battle to save his young friend from floating mines and Shy Guys and stuff. It mixes both vertically and horizontal scrolling levels and uses both screens to show the field of play.

IN A NUTSHELL: As long as there's plenty of variety, we'll be up for it.



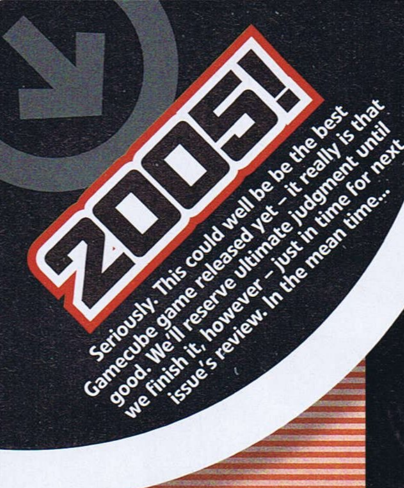
2005!

Twelve more months of Nintendo fun!
Your essential guide starts here…

There's more to the new year than a pocket-filling console and a European vacation for Leon Kennedy. Over the next 12 pages, we present you with a fine assortment of major new games for Gamecube. We've concentrated on the biggest and most imminent titles, but have listed every title in existence that you need to know about. Sit back, put your feet up and spend some time gawping into the future…

READY..?

TURN OVER FOR THE BIGGEST GAME ON THE PLANET…





THE KNOWLEDGE

- Easy and intuitive dual character system.
- Huge, free roaming environments populated by super-intelligent enemies.
- The Resident Evil plot to end all plots – with appearances from an old friend...
- Seamless gameplay to cinematic transitions – all using the same game engine.
- The most visually impressive and downright frightening Gamecube game to date...

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Capcom (Production Studio 4)

What have they done before?
Viewtiful Joe (NGC/84 90%)
Brilliantly different side-scrolling batter-'em-up.

RESIDENT EVIL 4

It's only a matter of weeks away, so let's take one last look at the game that's really going to kick-start your year...

△ Every action ia executed with just a quick stab of the A button. Convenient.



Call this a teaser, if you will. After our exhaustive 15-page preview of *Resi 4* back in **NGC**/100 we're loath to dish out too many spoilers, especially so close to its imminent US release. Which makes our life very difficult, because we're so excited about it. We want to tell you every mind-blowing detail, every shock and every surprise. It doesn't help that Capcom are pretty strict about the game's 'major' revelations either – we've got a great big, intimidating shopping list of details sitting on our desks, explaining what we can and can't tell you about the game. Hopefully that's some indication of just how much sensitive stuff is really in here. How much stuff that's genuinely rock your eyeballs out of their sockets, when you finally get the chance to see them for yourself.

So it's just a teaser, then – and for the sake of continuity we're going to kick off the proceedings where we left you last time. The Swamp boss at the end of chapter one had bean beaten, night has fallen, and Ashley, the president's daughter, is still trapped in the church...



△ Use this boulder to slow El Gigante down during your second encounter.

DON'T FANCY YOURS MUCH

Capcom prove that big ain't necessarily beautiful…

You've got to make your way back to the church – but the only available route is past the lair of El Gigante, a huge ogre-like creature that the villagers have kept for a day when they feel particularly threatened.

Oddly enough, El Gigante isn't exactly best of friends with the villagers. They try pulling the brute out with ropes, and when he does eventually emerge from his hole, all hell breaks loose.

The great beast vents his anger on the villagers, stomping and smashing his deranged captors into a bloody pulp. Once they've been dealt with, it's on to the next available fleshy target. You…

First things first, then. Shotgun. To the face. Er… it doesn't seem to be affecting him much, which is worrying to say the least. How about a nice rocket to the underbelly? Bugger – it's just as ineffective.



You can't hide either. Taking cover in a shed, desperately trying to phone his mum, Leon finally sees the light – the moonlight, that is, as El Gigante rips the roof off and smashes the place to pieces.



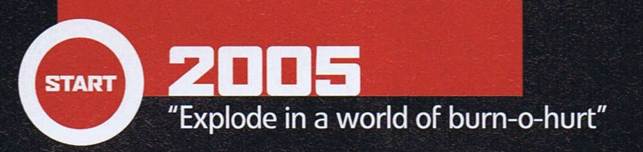
Uprooting a massive tree, El Gigante proceeds to brandish it like a bruising arboreal club. After a few crunching – not to mention, bloody – spankings with it, Leon's not looking in the best of shape.



But our hero's not alone. Remember that dog you saved earlier? (You did save it, didn't you?) He howls from a vantage point and joins the fight, littlest Hobo-style, distracting the big beast for you.



Now all you've got to do is kill it (El Gigante that is, not the dog, you sick freak), but how exactly? Well, we're not going to tell you. No siree – but we can guarantee that it's not going to be pretty…



WEAPONS OF WAR

And these are just the ones we're allowed to show you now – wait until you see the rest.



KNIFE

Quite useful, especially when you want to conserve ammo. It's now got a quick-access button using the left shoulder trigger, so it no longer takes up space in your inventory. Best used on solitary enemies for a sneak attack and smashing open crates – there's no sense wasting bullets on inanimate objects, is there?



PISTOL

The workhorse of any survival horror. When you absolutely, positively, have naff-all else to use, this will have to do. It's best used as a set-up weapon. Use it to stun enemies for a more useful kick to the floor, earning you some time if you're being crowded. Pleasingly, it can be powered up significantly later in the game.



SHOTGUN

Oh mama. If it's blood you're after, you're going to get it with this. A shot to the head will blow it clean off, no question. A shot to the chest will send your foe flying through the air, and at close range it can clear a good four to five advancing hillbillies with a single shot. A true life saver. You'll always want one of these with you.



MACHINE GUN

Great for crowd control and the ultimate panic weapon. Pistol too weak? Shotgun too slow? Whip this out, hold the trigger down and just dish out a liberal spraying of hot lead. The only problem, of course, is that it'll eat through your inventory ammo in no time. Best saved for that 'special occasion', then, eh?



ROCKET LAUNCHER

Comes with a sight for improved long-range accuracy – not that you need it; just aim in the general direction and let it rip, then watch anyone in the vicinity explode in a world of burn-o-hurt. It's best used on distant groups of enemies in exterior locations.



RIFLE

When it's precision you need, this is your best friend. It's particularly useful when it comes to whittling down enemy numbers from a distance and, more importantly, hobbling the villagers at the back of the knees when they're running off with Ashley. One shot to the leg and they'll drop her like a sack of hot potatoes.

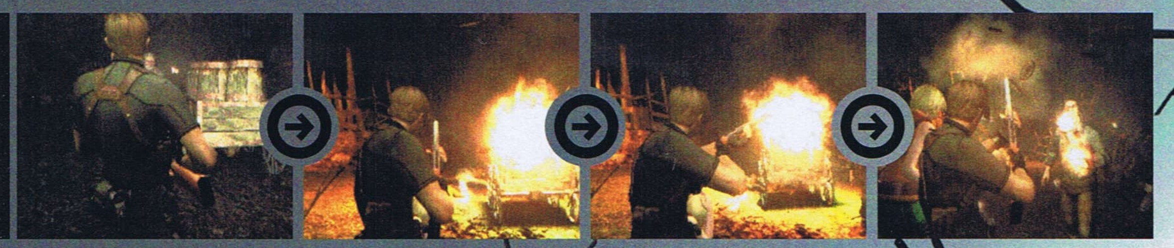
TEN FOUR

At various points you get Codec-like calls from a woman called Hunnigan – your mission leader. She gives control explanations and fills you in on where you should go next. Thankfully, they don't last as long as Mei Ling's irritating transmissions…



BURNING UP

One of the many set pieces in the game. A cart full of barrels can be set on fire and pushed down the hill into a pack of advancing villagers – resulting in a satisfying explosion of fire, wood and body parts. Yum.







SIX OF THE BEST

Okay, the monsters and the weapons and the thrill of fear are a huge part of Resi 4, but they're not the only things we enjoy about it. We also love…



LIKE OLD TIMES: Classic puzzles abound. To get to Ashley, for example, you have to light the red, green and blue lights to match the stained glass Los Iluminados symbol.



ORGANISER: You can move items in your inventory. If you shuffle everything and combine all your herbs, maybe you can make room for that extra weapon.



BUTTER FINGERS: There's nothing like using the villagers' weapons against them. Shoot the torch out of this guy's hands and watch him scream in agony as he burns.



CLEVER GIRL: Guiding Ashley isn't a pain. Tap X to tell her to wait or follow and that's it. She ducks if you point a gun at her – handy, as one hit kills her.



ATMOSPHERE: When it turns dark, there's a real sense of fear. You can't see much except when lightning strikes, and the constant rain gives a real air of gloom.



FEAR: The best battle so far. You, Luis and Ashley are in a house, villagers coming from all sides. Luis packs a pistol, you a shotgun – it's the messiest thing on GC.

We still get a weird kind of depression when we think of *Starfox Adventures*. And sometimes we even taste a bit of sick when we think of Prince Tricky. Keep him away from this game, please.

STARFOX ASSAULT

Foxy's real Gamecube debut
is almost ready for lift-off



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Battle through the star system, visiting planets, military installations, cities, forests and space ports along the way.
- Fly, drive or run around on foot.
- Multiplayer modes.
- Silky 60fps graphics.
- Krystal from *Adventures* is in the game. Will Prince Tricky be there too? Ooh, the anticipation!

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Namco

What have they done before?
Soul Calibur 2 (NGC/85 92%)
The best beat-'em-up you're likely to play on Gamecube.

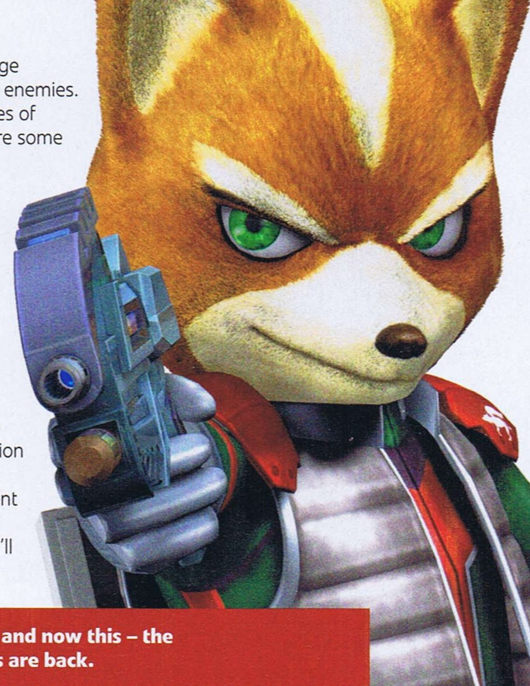
Currently scheduled for release in Japan and the US next month, *Starfox Assault* is one of our most anticipated titles for early 2005. It's a return to the multiple paths, cinematic presentation and skilful shooting of the N64 version, and we just can't wait to get hold of the finished game.

The developers at Namco, handling the coding duties on behalf of Nintendo, have wisely stuck to Shigeru Miyamoto's successful template. If you're familiar with the N64 game you'll have no problem getting used to the reworked controls.

In some levels Fox has to leave his vehicle and indulge in a spot of run-and-gun action. These scenes play a bit like Rare's excellent *Jet Force Gemini*, with the emphasis placed firmly on overwhelming you with huge numbers of relatively weak enemies. Survive the onrushing waves of cannon fodder and there are some huge bosses to tackle.

The controls have been changed somewhat since we first played it last May, with the complex but flexible dual analogue style previously used for the ground-based levels now greatly simplified. There may well be an option to switch between basic and advanced controls. We also noticed a 'bonus game' option on the title screen, which smacks of unlockable content and hidden goodies.

Slippages permitting, we'll review this one next issue.



ANDROSS

Foxes, frogs, rabbits, budgies and now this – the monkey head and giant hands are back.



It wouldn't be Starfox without an appearance from the Peter Reid of videogame villains, but this encounter takes place early in the game. Will we see a major plot twist after the battle? Or is it just one of many robot minions despatched by the vainest monkey in the known universe?







DON'T MISS THESE...

As with every other year in the videogame calendar (apart from the first one) you can expect to be playing a gutload of sequels in 2005. Number twos *(pffft)* are popular this year. NFL Street 2 is the first up (out right about now and reviewed on page 60), followed by Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams, Kao the Kangaroo: Round 2 and Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2 in March (even though we might have accidentally mentioned last issue that it probably wouldn't come out). If you're partial to a bit of Tom Clancy (who isn't?) you might be slightly pleased to hear that Ghost Recon 2 is pencilled in for an early March release too – although we wouldn't be shocked to see it slipping.



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

In fact, the best of the spring twos is Capcom's Viewtiful Joe 2. We gave it 87% in our import review last issue, and it's out on the 1st April (no joke) in the UK. Other direct sequels in

JOIN THE CLUB

The multiplayer mode just looks better and better. It's divided into levels for on-foot battles, flying vehicles or a combination of land and air combat. You can switch vehicles if they're available, and each game doesn't necessarily begin with a mad dash for the nearest Arwing, because you get some powerful weapons in the Landmaster tank or as a pedestrian too.


■ There was a level very much like this one in the N64 version.



■ The map on the left is for foot soldiers only. Interesting, hmm?



■ The best pic we've seen from the game, with Slippy lying dead.



■ Players on the ground can fire missiles at the Arwing pilots.



△ Fox makes like Duke Nukem.





△ The old 'hit + 3' was always one of our favourite bonus awards. Ahh, hit.

FALCO'S RETURN

This game sees the return of moody birdman Falco ('I suppose I should be grateful') whose careless omission from *Starfox Adventures* was never properly explained. We reckon somebody just forgot about him. Anyway, he's back to offer grudging assistance and more snide comments. We missed you Falks, you miserable old budgie.

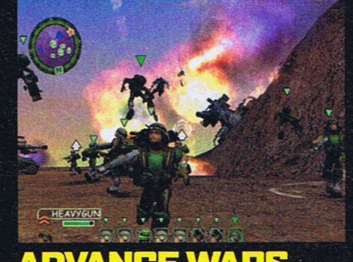


development include True Crime 2 and Call of Duty 2, both of which should surface at E3 in May.

Naturally, these aren't the only familiar faces making a return. Gamecube exclusives like New Zelda, New Pokémon and Advance Wars: Under Fire (well, if you've got a GBA this will be a familiar face) shine out from the release schedule. But there's also the multi-format range from EA to shrug indifferently at, if you're that way inclined. Medal of Honor: Dogs of War has slipped from its ambitious February release slot to 'sometime later'. EA's LA studio definitely needs to up the ante in light of Call of Duty's success. They'll be following this with the 2006 range of FIFA, Madden and NHL, as well as Fight Night 2005 (see last issue) and a few more sporting surprises besides…

Following up their 2003 so-so Hulk movie tie-in, Vivendi are set to release The Incredible Hulk in the autumn. Rather than bother with all that David Banner business, you just control the green guy as he smashes his way around a city. As well as indulging in some building destruction and a bit of cop-crushing, you'll be whisked off to various missions – but it's fair to say they don't require much in the way of puzzle-solving brain power.

While we're on a super-hero tip, be sure to keep your eye on Activision


ADVANCE WARS

2005!

Born to thrill – *'Splitters* is the first-person gun game that doesn't take itself anywhere near as seriously as most of its contemporaries. Comedy and death, together at last.

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

Exposing the challenge mode and arcade leagues in our favourite first-person shooter.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- New and improved story mode.
- Zombie monkeys.
- Ladies with short skirts.
- Design your own maps.
- Multiplayer bots.
- New arcade leagues.
- Loads of quirky challenges.
- Vehicles.
- AI buddies.





FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Free Radical Design

What have they done before?
Second Sight (NGC/97 90%)
Stealth and telekinetic powers in one excellent adventure.

Not too much longer to wait until *TimeSplitters Future Perfect* is released in early March, although with *Resident Evil 4* and, at the time of writing, Nintendo DS scheduled to launch in the same month, here's hoping you've managed to keep hold of a little Christmas cash.

We've covered this one extensively in recent issues, and while part of last month's exclusive Special Investigation made very little sense in English (Mim – you're fired) you might at least have guessed how much we're looking forward to it.

Two things we haven't featured in much detail have been the Arcade and Challenge modes, which were a fantastic source of long-term entertainment and I'm The Best high score action in *TimeSplitters 2*. Although the primary selling point this time is the expanded and enhanced Story mode, playing arcade leagues and going for those glittering challenge medals are likely to be where the majority of the single-player fun lies.

Some of the old favourites are back, most importantly the Behead The Undead challenge in which you attempt to separate large numbers of zombies from their heads while operating in a confined space and with a limited weapon. Instead of human zombies you have to fight monkeys, which really messes with your aiming since you have to look down at the floor when the little devils start swarming around your ankles.

> **"HEADS YOU'VE SEVERED CAN BE USED AS PROJECTILES..."**

In a subsequent challenge you get to use the gravity gun to throw objects at the zombies' heads – see the box on the opposite page for a shot of us doing precisely that. It's very satisfying. Heads you've already severed can be used as projectiles – if you're lucky, lobbing one into a crowded area causes a snooker-style chain reaction, earning combo

GO GO CAT RACER

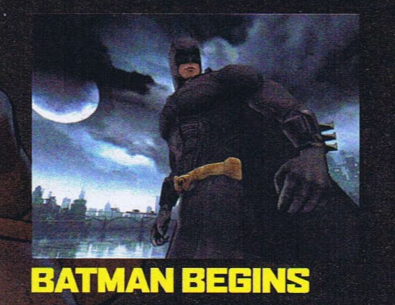
Find a robot cat and you can race it around like a hairy pencil-sharpener on wheels.

- Found a mechanical cat? Go grab it to activate a cat-racing game. There are challenges based on this.
- See how its stink-eye glints with high-res textured splendour? There's no button for lowering that tail.
- Cats are unstable at high speeds. Cornering too fast results in a totally sideways moggie.

this year. They've got a trio of intriguing games in development. First up, Ultimate Spider-Man. Rather than being based on the next Spider-Man movie it follows the titular comic strip, which essentially restarts the Peter Parker story from scratch. We expect the game to reflect the striking look of the comic books.

Activision continue to dip into Marvel's roster of characters with both Iron Man and Fantastic Four pencilled in for 2005 releases. Both are likely to be violent action-adventures, with Fantastic Four launching alongside the movie (both out on the 15th July). The Iron Man film's not due out until 2006, so we're not overly-confident that we'll see the game this year…

Film licenses your kind of thing? How about a nice portion of Batman Begins then? Eurocom (the people behind *James Bond 007: Nightfire*) are in charge of the game's development for EA, and it'll arrive in time for the Christian Bale origin-of-Batman film in June. In terms of quality, we hope the game's closer to Treyarch's free-swinging *Spider-Man 2* than it is EA's own dismal *Catwoman*. The one thing we can be sure of is some really tidy character modelling.



BATMAN BEGINS

Film licences *and* monkeys your thing? Please, then, go nuts for Ubi Soft's King Kong. Based around Peter



points and creating some nicely gory splatter effects.

Arcade mode retains the league structure of the previous *TimeSplitters* titles, with a few rule changes and new locations for these tough matches against the computer. Gladiator is one of the arcade game styles we enjoyed most – in that variation only one person can score a kill, so everyone teams up to chase after the lucky player in possession of the glowing gladiator aura, while he attempts to grab as many points as possible. There's also a new 'monkey assistant' mode which is unlocked after you've completed everything else. All of the arcade games can be played with a mixture of humans and bots.

Anyway, this monster of a game is less than a couple of months away. Just enough time to tweak the difficulty level (it's outrageously hard right now) and maybe throw in a few extra surprises. We'll have a full review very soon.



△ Shooting at the glowing gladiator.



△ It's a league match against loads of bots. They just love to maim each other.

BEHEAD THE UNDEAD... ...AND OTHER FAVOURITE CHALLENGES



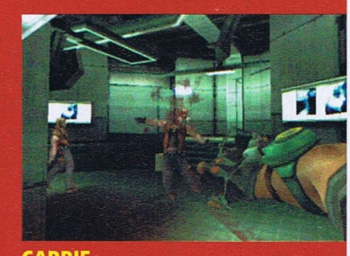
ZOMBIE MONKEYS
Forget the shambling humans – zombie monkeys are faster, more agile, and require you to crouch to get the cleanest head shots.



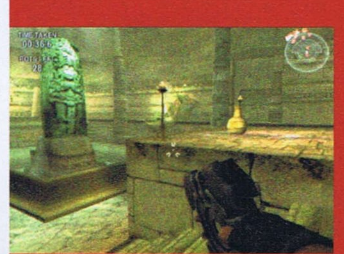
EXPERIMENTAL
See how their heads have been peeled to expose the monkey brains? We half expected a bunch of terrorists in balaclavas to come and 'rescue' them.



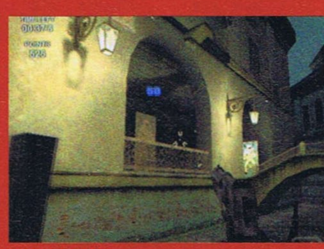
MEATY
These undead don't have heads. They're walking slabs of beef, straight out of the butcher's freezer. Drug them up and watch them pop.



CARRIE
Use your anti-gravity powers to sever heads using flying boxes. When you run out of boxes, use some of those spare heads. Recycling in action.



VANDALISE
Smash priceless urns in this mysterious jungle temple. Scatter timed mines as you run through the level, and listen for the damage.

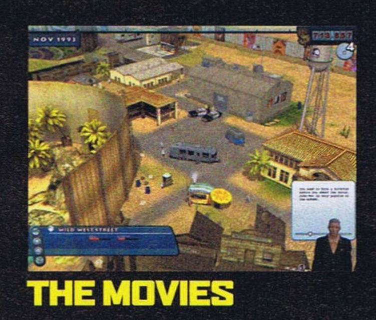


HARMLESS
If you don't want to risk getting hurt, try shooting at cardboard targets. There are several of these levels, all of them deadly difficult.





'Lord of the Rings' Jackson's retelling of the classic, Ubi's *Beyond Good & Evil* team working out of their Montpellier (France) and Montreal studios are getting assistance from the cheeky New Zealander himself (although we imagine he's got plenty on his plate getting the film in the can). Don't be surprised if you get to play as both the ape and the diddy humans in this one. We're looking forward to taking on some planes…



THE MOVIES

While we couldn't give a monkey's about the very real possibility of another Shrek game in 2005, we're certainly keen to see what Activision can do with the game based on Dreamworks' next animated feature, Madagascar. With voices provided by the likes of Ben Stiller, Chris Rock and Ali G creator Sacha Baron Cohen, it's the story of four Central Park Zoo animals who get sent back to Africa and have to learn how to survive in the wild. Let's hope the game sets its ambitions higher than the usual platform-adventure where you need to use the different skills of the animals to overcome obstacles (open gates). Expect it in September…

Sticking with Activision for a second, they're still all-on for satisfying budding directors and producers in November with the release of Peter Molyneux/Lionhead's The Movies. It's a bit PC, we'll admit,

2005! 'Real' football, schizo cartoon murderers, your very own robot maid and loads more! It's exactly like they told us the future would be, only better!

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2004 – 2005





△ Not all the players look like their real counterparts. This is Craig Bellamy.

The charmp-yuns – and the only game with *that* theme music is almost ready for lift-off.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Widescreen presentation with status displays in the black letterbox bars.
- Play European ties and key scenarios from the Prem.
- Design your own manager, then watch him getting all frustrated on the touchlines.
- Nice replays.



If you're hooked on the Champions League – a competition designed to be mind-numbingly predictable until the latter stages – you probably won't mind being sold a version of *FIFA Soccer* under a different name.

To be fair, this UEFA game has a slightly different way of doing things than its big brother. For starters, it really is based on the Champions League and nothing else. While you get to play the odd training match and a handful of Premiership games, the focus is all about qualifying for the only European competition that matters and preparing for forthcoming games.

It's essentially a season-long scenario mode. You start in the final match of the preceding season, which you must win to clinch the final Champions League spot. With that accomplished, the summer break sees your club get bought by a millionaire who provides transfer cash as long as you keep fulfilling his objectives.

First of all you'll have to thrash your own reserve team to earn the right to strengthen the squad. Lose and you'll be told which players you have to sell. During the full season you play all of the Champions League ties plus a few key Premiership matches – some of which will give you objectives such as recovering a 2-0 deficit with just 20 minutes remaining.

You can only choose Premiership sides or teams from the equivalent divisions elsewhere in Europe, so there's no possibility of seeing the likes of Bristol City take on Barcelona. And with just 50 games in a campaign, you'll have seen your side lift the trophy months before the real thing is decided. Luckily there are two-player options and user-created leagues to mess with, although we'd be inclined to buy the most recent *FIFA* if we wanted to play that sort of thing.

The presentation is unusual. It's in widescreen, with status displays in the black borders. TV-style cameras show replays of crucial moments from earlier in the match, and you get the odd cutaway view showing your manager pacing up and down the touchline, chewing gum.

It's out very soon, at the start of February, and were it not for the fact that the magic of print means we're writing this before Christmas, we'd have reviewed it this issue. Next month, then.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Electronic Arts

What have they done before?
FIFA 2005 (NGC/99 75%)
Smart and comprehensive football sim that's very similar to last year's version.



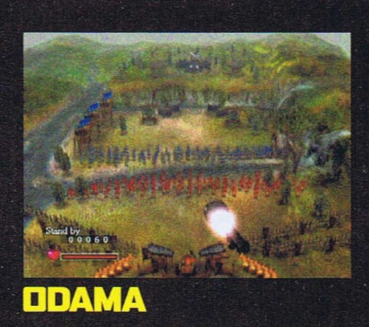
△ How wildly they celebrate finishing fourth (aka third losers).



△ If they don't make it into the Champions Honeypot, these twins will be homeless, sleeping in the back of their Bentley.



△ The manager holds his head as the seconds tick away. Can his boys foul and cheat to hold on to their precious 1-0 lead?



ODAMA

but the film studio god sim has plenty to offer both creative and accountant types. You get to build up a Hollywood studio from the soundless, virtually plotless 1900s through to 2010, hiring the best people for the various jobs, keeping your stroppy leading ladies happy, choosing scripts and actually calling the shots yourself. The movies you come up will reflect the time period as well – you'll be shooting a Western one moment, a robot flick the next. Or maybe you could combine the two? Oh, that's been done already.

The Movies isn't the only original game coming our way this year. This is the point we'd wibble on about the Jeff Minter/Lionhead Unity trippy music-shooter experience for Gamecube, but it's been canned. CANNED. The full details are on p.8. So instead, we'll kick off with Odama, the pinball-wargame you've all been waiting for. Kittsy was very impressed with what he saw of this at E3 2004. It sounds ridiculous on paper – command your army of soldiers to attack, while you twang the flippers to send a giant cannonball into enemy territory – but it's jaw-slacking stuff when you see it in action. No release date's been set yet – not for Japan, US, UK, *nowhere*.

Or how about Geist? That's another one that's been in

CHIBI ROBO

Sweep, polish, recharge.



intendo's decision to publish this robot housekeeping sim outside of Japan has certainly attracted a lot of interest, but it was probably Shigsy's personal endorsement of the game that put it on the map for those Nintendo fans who have heard of it.

In fact Nintendo's marketing bods are so impressed with the game concept and character design, they're busy making long-term plans for little Chibi and his metal pals. We'd love it if they manufactured a dozen or so real Chibis to clean up some of the filth around the **NGC** office (a couple of the dirty dinner plates under Geraint's desk recently celebrated their first birthday) but we'd guess that a sequel and maybe some collectable toys would be more likely.

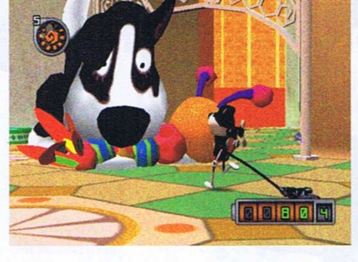
The game is all about pleasing Chibi's human family by keeping the house nice and tidy. There are platforming sections and puzzles based around Chibi's limited power supply – he can only hold a certain amount of charge, and must keep some in reserve for activating other household appliances.

It looks absolutely adorable, and coming from the software house responsible for the wacky and original RPG *Giftpia*, it's sure to hold plenty of surprises. Nintendo's involvement ought to ensure the English translation is of a reasonably literate standard and the whole gaming experience is of the highest quality. Of course there's no word on the release date…



△ Chibi fights metal ants!

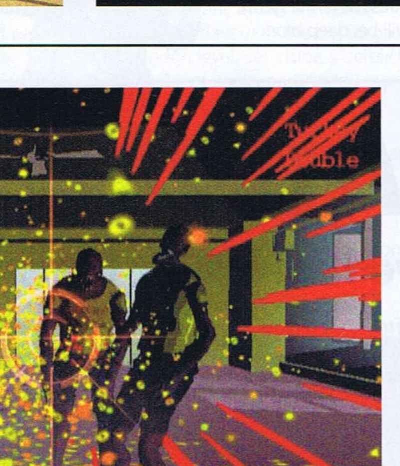
△ Chibi mops up an accident after the baby's nappy exploded!





KILLER 7

Mysterious manga murder.



△ Move the crosshairs and shoot people if they happen to have sinister monsters living inside them. Then play a funky dance game using the D-pad (note: a lie).



his will be the last of the 'Capcom Five' when it's released later this year, following *P.N.03*, *Viewtiful Joe*, *Resident Evil 4* and the appropriately named *Dead Phoenix*, which was cancelled.

Its regular appearances at gaming trade shows over the past couple of years have invariably been in non-playable video format – at E3 we were itching to prise open the front of the *Killer 7* demo cabinet and plug a controller into that naked Gamecube, just to see how it plays.

However, the presence of armed guards dissuaded us, and by the time the next show rolls around, the game will be in the shops. It's a light-gun shooter without the light-gun; an interactive anime; a third-person exploration adventure… perhaps.

Will style triumph over substance? Is there a deep, thoughtful game beneath those astonishing graphics? All will be revealed very soon, we dare say.

development for some time now, and so release should be imminent. While it retains some FPS conventions, Nintendo's long-awaited shooter does give you the chance to possess humans, animals and inanimate objects as you try and find your body in the compound of the Volks Corporation. You're currently wandering about the place in spirit form, see, and you'll get to have a right old giggle taking over a computer or fire extinguisher and scaring Volks employees crapless, or entering the body of a dog or mouse and using them to reach previously inaccessible areas. Again, no UK release date's been set for this, but expect to see it in the US during 'Q2' (our money's on an April launch).



GEIST

Then there are the games which at least do their best to sound new, even if at second glance they might not be entirely innovative. Dragon Booster from Konami is one that has the potential to be different – a cartoon licence described as a 'high-octane adventure set against a background of dragon racing' – and there's Starcraft: Ghost, a game which, if you've never heard of the PC Starcraft series, will seem fresh. Even if you're a fan of Starcraft, this will feel a little different thanks to it ditching its usual top-down strategy approach in favour of a third-person

Where would we be without a year's supply of monkeys, marshmallow, and a selection of millionaire sports stars 'keeping it real' by playing in the road? Nowhere, that's where!



DONKEY KONGA 3

Drums, monkeys and J-pop.

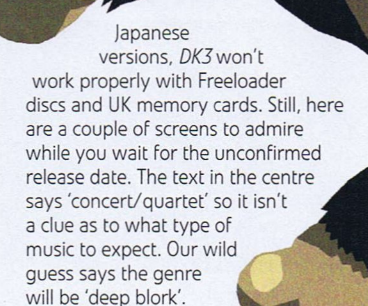


Everybody loves *Donkey Konga's* bongo-bashing party fun, and although we're still on the first instalment in this country it's good to know that the third version is being prepared for release over in Japan.

They haven't blessed us with any useful information, so we can't reveal the track listing at this time. Not that it would make a great deal of sense to an English audience, given the heavy bias towards J-pop and Japanese TV themes in the last two versions.

This is definitely the kind of thing where quick sequels are most welcome, because all they're doing is effectively extending the lifespan of the original game by adding more tunes to it. *Donkey Konga 3* uses similar 3D backgrounds to the second version, and also includes a few 3D character models – although if you're expecting any kind of demonstration of graphical prowess, you're looking at the wrong game.

We still haven't heard any details regarding a first UK sequel, and we can safely assume that, like the other Japanese versions, *DK3* won't work properly with Freeloader discs and UK memory cards. Still, here are a couple of screens to admire while you wait for the unconfirmed release date. The text in the centre says 'concert/quartet' so it isn't a clue as to what type of music to expect. Our wild guess says the genre will be 'deep blork'.



KIRBY ADVENTURE

You've got to give him credit for persistence.







This year will see Kirby once again gracing our Gamecubes, hopefully with a little more success than he had with the thoroughly unimpressive *Air Ride* (which copped a mighty 51% back in **NGC**/85).

Kirby Adventure (as the game's current working title goes) isn't a racing game but it does have several four-player modes. Other than that, Nintendo's corporate mouth remains firmly shut regarding concrete details on the game. Probably because they know it's likely to be dismissed as another kiddie platformer, which is slightly unfair when you think of some of the excellent games our pink hero used to star in before fame got to him and he went all rubbish.

Anyway, Kirby still has his fans – including us, after we dug out the original 1992 *Kirby's Dreamland* for the 'grey brick' Game Boy. Make something like that for the Gamecube and all will be forgiven. But Kirby's creator Masahiro Sakurai has long since cut all ties with the series, and we're not sure exactly how much Nintendo is willing to invest in a game that isn't likely to be a blockbuster.

Stick it in your 2005 diary, and as soon as we learn of a confirmed release date we'll let you know. Then we'll dismiss it as a kiddie platformer, just to get on Nintendo's nerves, before acclaiming it as the Best Thing Ever. Or maybe not.

action adventure. Naturally there's a stealth element to the game (it seems to be videogame law these days), but if heroine Nova can't be fagged to use her psionic skills to get one over on the enemy she can always call up a tactical nuclear hit. Beautiful.

Then there are the rumours, some very interesting indeed. Rumours of Free Radical being entrusted with the development of the next 007 game by EA (remember that much of Free Rad's talent was honed on the original N64 *GoldenEye*, so we're not completely sceptical about that one). Then there's the story about Neversoft creating a new, original FPS for Activision alongside Tony Hawk's Underground 3. Or even the one that's suggested that Mario 128 will indeed appear on Gamecube this year, rather than Revolution (yeeees, *that* sounds likely).


STARCRAFT: GHOST

It's Nintendo DS's touchdown in Europe that's the real talking point of 2005, though. Will it be the death of GBA? Nah. There are so many GBAs in people's hands, there's going to be life in the system for some time. While we're sure to see a slow decline in third-party GBA releases towards the end of the year as publishers migrate their staff and resources to the next-gen handheld, there'll still be some strong first-party support in the


△ Without access to free healthcare, many basketball players had to learn basic medical procedures, such as how to wedge a ball into a body cavity.

NBA STREET V3

Another super-size helping of our favourite basketball game.


The last version of this game was more fun than any basketball sim had a right to be, keeping us totally absorbed for a good 25 hours of Career mode gameplay. The sequel promises more of the same, along with a brand new combo system for creating special moves and interactive gamebreakers.

Rather than sitting back to watch the show after powering up, you can get your two teammates involved in the move. Combining various buttons with directions on the C-stick will string multiple moves into a three-man combo stretching the length of the court, ideally ending with a gamebreaker dunk.

There's a dunk-off in which you get a few seconds to have a pop at the basket, with the aim being to impress the judges rather than just score the two points. You can even customise your own court, which is a bit of overkill given the 12 built-in courts. It's due in February, so we'll be reviewing it next issue.

FIFA STREET

Kicking it in officially licensed style, on a street near you.

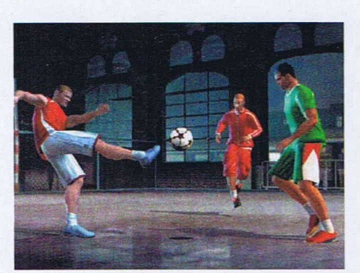

Sprinkling the EA Sports Big magic dust on the revered sport of footie could be seen as something of a risk, given the unremarkable record of past non-serious football games. But we reckon the Street series has the potential to do it better than previous efforts such as *Red Card, Sega Soccer Slam* and, erm, *Urban Freestyle.*

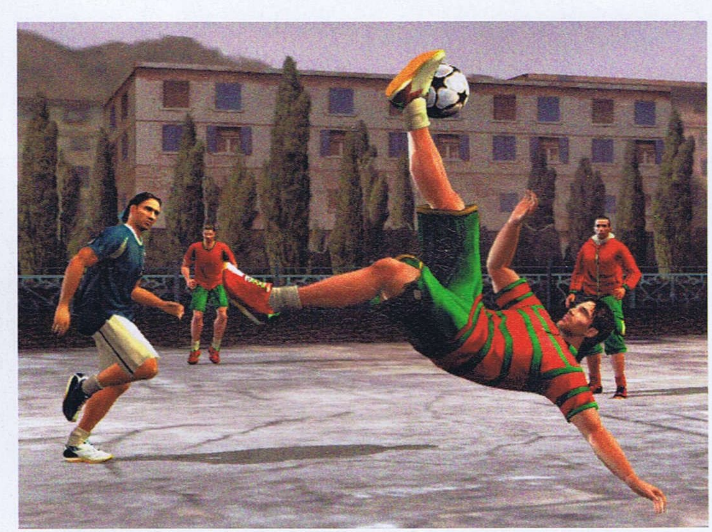
Street staples such as gamebreaker specials are included in this four-on-four mixture of sports sim and kung-fu movie, plus something very much like the wall moves from the recent *NFL Street 2* – you can do a lot more than just play a one-two off the wall.

There are real players mixed in with the ones you create for the career mode, and the 10 locations revealed so far are authentic urban arenas with a spot of local flavour in the backdrops. The London level, set inside a derelict railway depot, looks particularly grimy and atmospheric. Other locations include the dusty ruins of Lagos, Nigeria, picturesque Rio de Janeiro, and a lovely clean youth centre sort of thing in Amsterdam.

The release date hasn't been set, but you can count on it being long before the end of the football season. We'll have an in-depth preview soon.




△ On the left, Wayne Rooney miscues a volley and sends the ball crashing through a window. On the right, some fool encroaches on the pitch and does a handstand.


△ A certain madness of skill from the Portuguese boys. There are a few players from each national team – no big squads to manage with, just four per side.

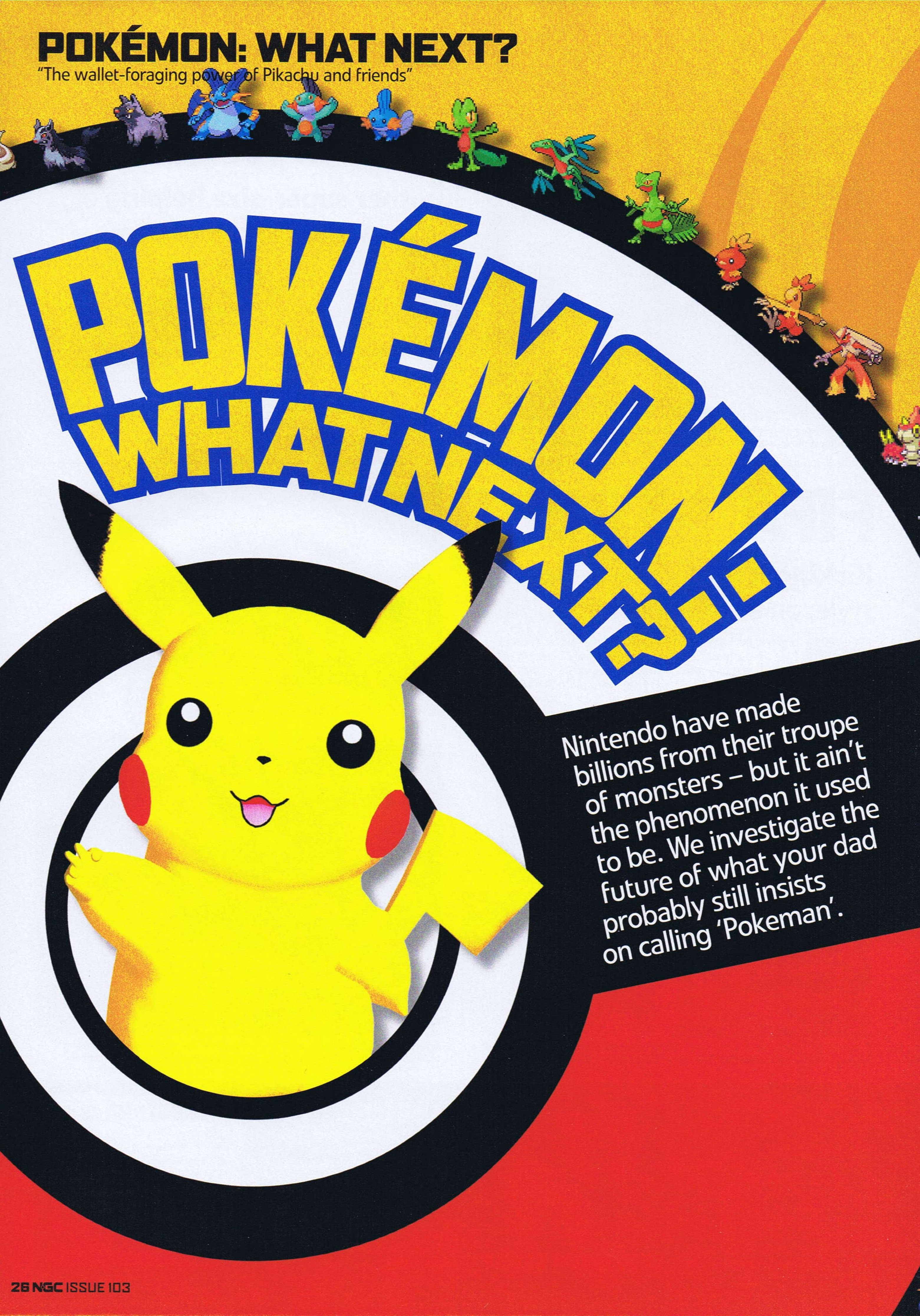
form of Mario Party Advance, Yoshi's Universal Gravitation and DK King of Swing (reviewed on page 46).

Having said that, the most exciting portable games are coming up on DS. As you read this, Nintendo will have confirmed both the launch date and initial software line-up. It's the dirty great collection of DS titles in development that should arrive for the system before the end of the year which has got us frothing. Our hitlist's dominated by first-party titles (it's harder to gauge the potential quality of third-party games after the mixed bag of gems and excrement churned up for the US and Japanese launch). You can expect us to be raving like total loons after E3 about The Legend of Zelda, Pokémon Diamond/Pearl, New Super Mario Bros, Puppy Times, Mario Kart DS, Animal Crossing and Yoshi's Touch & Go…


LEGEND OF ZELDA

THAT'S ALL FOLKS...

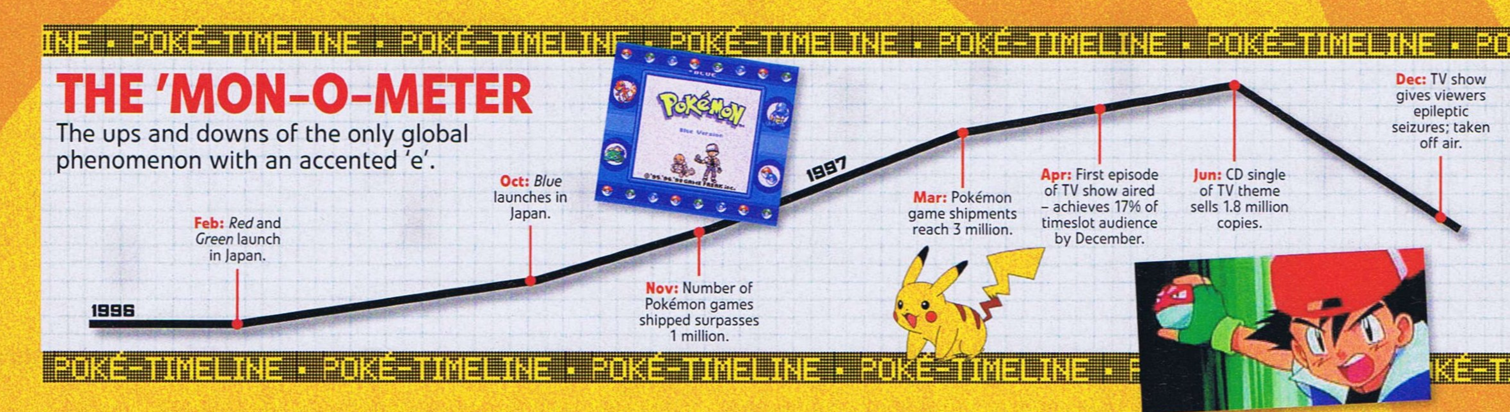
… for now. Come back in June, when we'll have another 'future look' special with all the secret titles that'll be unveiled at the E3 trade show in Los Angeles. Alternatively, turn the page to see what we think the future holds for the Pokémon series *right now.* We just can't get enough 2-0-0-5…



Nintendo have made billions from their troupe of monsters – but it ain't the phenomenon it used to be. We investigate the future of what your dad probably still insists on calling 'Pokeman'.

POKÉMON: WHAT NEXT?

A look ahead – with no help from Psyduck







'MONTELLECTUAL

Pinning down the secret of Pokémon's staggering success isn't easy. But, believe us, people have tried.

"GAMES LIKE POKÉMON ARE BUILT ON 'OPERANT CONDITIONING' – REWARDING PEOPLE FOR A CERTAIN TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR (LIKE CATCHING MONSTERS) SO THEY'RE ENCOURAGED TO DO IT AGAIN AND AGAIN. "CATCH 'EM ALL", IF YOU WILL."
Child psychologist David Walsh, Time magazine, 1999.

POKÉMON GIVES YOU A FEELING OF POWER. "[IT] AFFORDS CHILDREN THE CHANCE TO BE IN CONTROL OF A COMPLEX UNIVERSE AND FOR ONCE ACCUMULATE KNOWLEDGE IN A SUBJECT THEIR PARENTS DO NOT UNDERSTAND, THUS MAKING THEM FEEL POWERFUL AND MASTERFUL."
Lewis Grossberger, Media Week, 1999.

IT COULD BE ADDICTIVE. "SOME PARENTS HAVE DESCRIBED THEIR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR IN TERMS THAT FIT THE [ELEMENTS OF ADDICTION]. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT PLEASURABLE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES CAUSE THE BODY TO PRODUCE... ENDORPHINS. THESE SUBSTANCES ARE ACTUALLY ADDICTIVE."
Dr Leonard Holmes Ph.D, 1999.

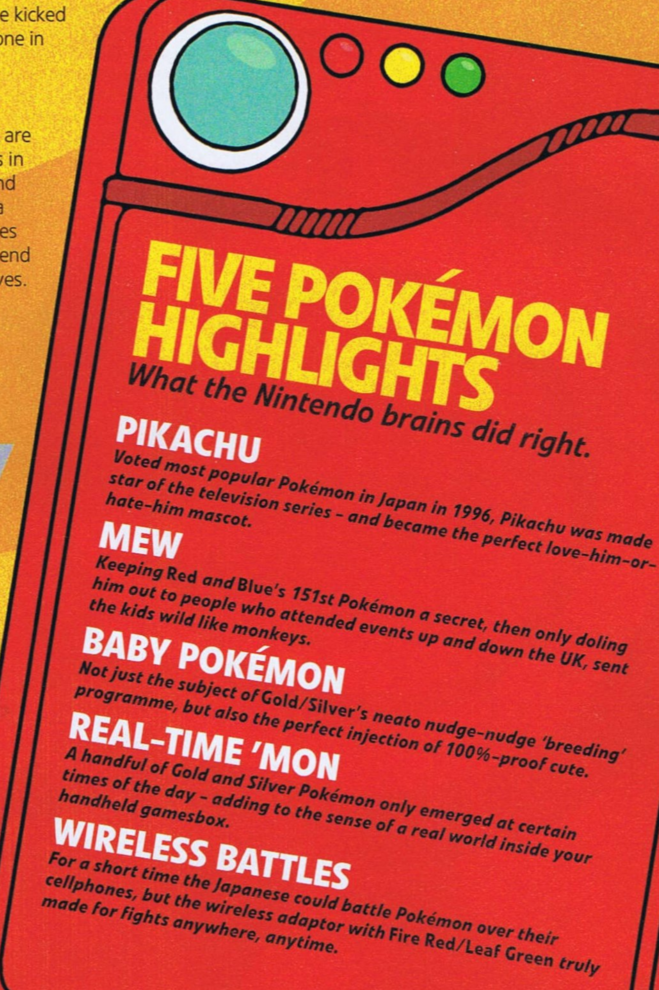
IT APPEALS TO THE STAMP COLLECTOR IN ALL OF US. "IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE SOMETHING... WITH ALL THE TRADING AND COLLECTING AND THE SPINOFFS WITH THE CARDS AND SO ON. KIDS HAVE ALWAYS COLLECTED THINGS... BUT THERE'S BEEN NO REAL OUTLET FOR THAT FOR AGES."
Dick Francis, then head of Nintendo's UK distributor THE Games, CTW, 2000.

Pokémon probably saved Nintendo. Back in century 20, we used to be fond of mocking then-Nintendo VIP Dick Francis and his robotic refrain of "Never underestimate the power of Pokémon". But – blast him – he was right. Because without the wallet-foraging power of Pikachu and friends, the history of Nintendo's consoles would probably be very different. Unpleasantly different.

That chubby yellow Pokémon logo and its chubby yellow mascot are still able to shift games in spadefuls – *Fire Red* and *Leaf Green* racked up a quarter of a million sales in only their first weekend on Europe's shop shelves. But that's not as important as you might think. When Pokémania was at its height, plenty of people thought the games were just another offshoot of the cards, the cartoon series, the movies and the screaming Pikachu toys, rather than the thing that gave birth to it all. In other

"POKÉMON ISN'T THE ROARING RETAIL MONSTER IT ONCE WAS"

But Pokémon isn't the roaring retail monster it once was. In space-year 2000, it was a phenomenon so phenomenal that Dale Winton once made two jokes about it on the BBC's lottery programme. By the end of 2001, though, it was number one on Google's annual 'Declining Queries' list – amazingly, people's interest in Pokémon was dropping faster than 2000-specific events like the Sydney Olympics and the US presidential election. Kids used to beat each other up for their Pokémon trading cards; now, you're more likely to be kicked in for daring to show one in the playground.



FIVE POKÉMON HIGHLIGHTS

What the Nintendo brains did right.

PIKACHU
Voted most popular Pokémon in Japan in 1996, Pikachu was made star of the television series – and became the perfect love-him-or-hate-him mascot.

MEW
Keeping Red and Blue's 151st Pokémon a secret, then only doling him out to people who attended events up and down the UK, sent the kids wild like monkeys.

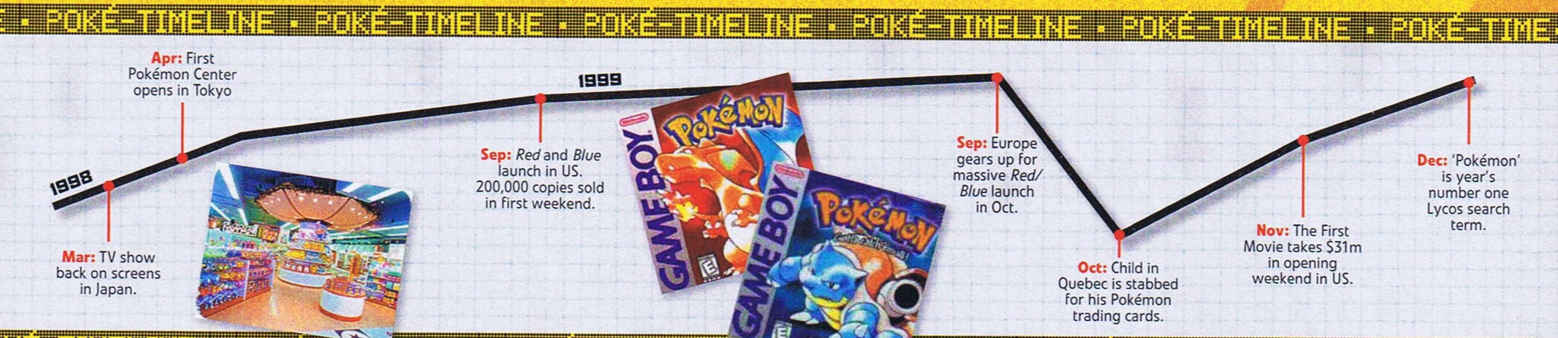
BABY POKÉMON
Not just the subject of Gold/Silver's neato nudge-nudge 'breeding' programme, but also the perfect injection of 100%-proof cute.

REAL-TIME 'MON
A handful of Gold and Silver Pokémon only emerged at certain times of the day – adding to the sense of a real world inside your handheld gamesbox.

WIRELESS BATTLES
For a short time the Japanese could battle Pokémon over their cellphones, but the wireless adaptor with Fire Red/Leaf Green truly made for fights anywhere, anytime.

POKÉMON: WHAT NEXT?

"Smothered in electric rats"



THE POKÉMON CONSTITUTION

Ten golden rules that we reckon can help keep Pokémon games top of the charts – and then some.

1. ENOUGH WITH THE NEW POKÉMON.
The thought of rummaging around in the tall grass for 500+ Pokémon makes us leak liquid fear. We'd prefer to see more interesting things done with fewer 'Mon.

2. CUT THE ADVENTURING BACK A TAD.
From *Red* right up to *Emerald*, Pokémon games have always dipped when the Trainer-crammed confuse-o-mazes arrive at around ten hours in. Cut it.

3. GIVE OUR EYES THE LOVE THEY TRULY DESERVE.
Nintendo are the masters of giving 2D games a visual makeover while keeping the good stuff intact – they've done it so well, so often. We say DS is ripe for a three-dimensional Pokémon.

4. COMBAT THAT KICKS A LARGE AMOUNT OF ARSE.
We want to see those monsters really working up a sweat in battle – no more feeble stuff like jerking slightly in the enemy's direction and then sinking into the dirt.

5. FRIENDS AREN'T JUST THERE FOR FIGHTING WITH.
Outside the battles, all we've got is bleedin' berry blending and those awful *Ruby/Sapphire* beauty contests. We all hate those. A range of fast-action



△ **Imagine playing Pokémon online, fighting people all over the world.**

STORE WATCH

The wheels have fallen off the Pokémon merchandising bandwagon.

Lisa Artemis, PR executive at GAME, thinks Pokémon is as big as it's ever been. "It's very difficult to forecast," she says. "But *Fire Red* and *Leaf Green* continue to be top sellers – they're always in the top ten. *Ruby* and *Sapphire* did incredibly well, too, especially considering they were launched in summer, which is traditionally a very quiet time for game sales. I don't think the appeal is waning."

But as far as non-game products go, we're a long way from the days of entire shop walls being smothered in electric rats and tortoises with cannons on their backs. The website for Toys 'R' Us lists just five available Pokémon toys if you search for 'Pokémon' – including the inevitable "replica Pokéball" – and the market for trading cards seems to have been swallowed up entirely by the mighty Yu-Gi-Oh!

Time was when Nintendo were boasting about enrolling "more than 800 licensees for Pokémon products". We remember them handing us a list of licensees in 2000 that stretched to so many pages that the staple simply gave up under the pressure and fell out. But now, apart from new trading cards and telly show episodes, we couldn't find any new Pokémon products planned for 2005 at all. Which means you'd best be prepared for making your own fun if you're still listing 'Pokémaniac' in the Hobbies & Interests section of your CV.

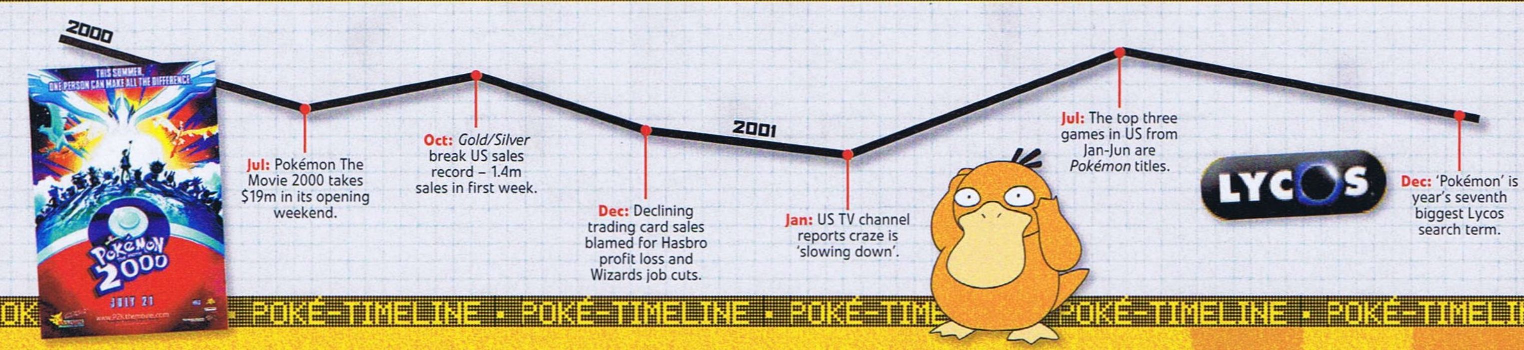


words, Pokémon didn't earn its crown as King Of The Kids from game sales. After all, you wouldn't call Zelda a success on a par with Pokémon, yet *Wind Waker* sold 50,000 more copies than *Fire Red/Leaf Green* on its own launch weekend.

So what's to blame for the decline of Pokémon? We reckon it's those regular targets of our wrath, marketing people. Originally, Pokémon was targeted solely at its 'core market' – kids, and male kids at that. Almost out of Nintendo's control, the spiralling success spread to an unusual number of girls (over the page, Nintendo Product Manager Marko Hein claims that 30% of Pokémon players are female). Even mums got involved with it. "I am alternately amazed and mortified to admit that I have become a

POKÉMON: WHAT NEXT?

A look ahead – with no help from Psyduck



minigames should fix that nicely and give us something to share.

6. LET US BUTTON-STAB PAST THE BORING BITS.
We want the power to teleport to a previous location *right from the start*. And while they're at it, Ninty could throw in a button that lets us skip the screen-wiping animations and tedious yakking of Trainers.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLO PLAYERS.
Not everyone's got friends to play with, you know. Let's see minigames, sidequests, secrets and cheats opened up for players who work their way through without mates.

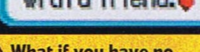
8. ONE AT A TIME, PLEASE.
Yes, we're serious. Nintendo: stop wasting development time knocking out two near-identical titles, just so you can scoop up a wad of extra cash from completists who *have* to catch 'em all. Too late for *Diamond* and *Pearl*, though.

9. IT SHOULD HAVE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STORY.
Does *everyone* born into the magical world of Pokémon have to engage in a long series of Pokémon battles across a largely feature-free map of routes and cities? No. We'd like a whole new story, perhaps with less travelling.

10. EIGHT YEARS OF SAMEY GAMES IS ENOUGH.
After ten Game Boy games (and all the spinoffs) the Pokémon formula remains largely unchanged. It's getting a bit boring. Time to freshen up the franchise with Nintendo magic juice – and remember, not by adding new monsters!



△ Everyone knows Pika. We reckon Nintendo should stop making new 'Mon and let us do more with the ones we've got.



△ What if you have no friends? Eh? EH?



△ Baby Pika. Aaaw. He's never been as popular as Da 'Chu, though.

Pokémaniac," said one mother on womengamers.com at the peak of Pokémon's success.

Since then, starting with the launch of Gamecube, Nintendo have been on a long, monotonous drive for 'mature gamers'. Now, their products are expressly targeted at 'demographics' like teen girls (the pink SP) and, er, tattooed people (the Tribal SP). *Ruby* and *Sapphire* sit alongside a Game Boy Advance SP that's tagged as being "For Men", while *Pokémon Dash* is stranded on a new handheld that's advertised in the US with puerile jokes about chatting up women.

That shift in direction could be meddling with what's known as the 'media mix'. Pokémon invented this concept, combining everything from videogames and trading cards to TV shows and movies, enabling you to collect, trade, play and really *experience* Pokémon. The result: you're hooked (and similar fads like Yu-Gi-Oh! have since nicked this very neat concept). But with Nintendo turning their back on the kids, and with no new ideas from the movies, the TV shows or the trading cards over the course of eight long years, it's no surprise that the Pokémon media mix has lost its flavour.

And that puts Nintendo in a tricky position. In the West, the Pokémon phenomenon didn't spring from the games, but the success of the games is the only spark Nintendo have left to set the Poké-bonfire blazing again.

As a result, Nintendo look to be fixing their

"NINTENDO HAVE BEEN ON A LONG, MONOTONOUS DRIVE FOR 'MATURE GAMERS'"



FIVE POKÉMON LOWLIGHTS

What happens when Nintendo brains go bad.

THE MOVIES
The first one wasn't that bad, but next to Pixar's magic the virtually static 'animation' of the TV series is increasingly embarrassing.

POKÉMON MINI
Remember this? Over-confident about Pokémon's appeal, Nintendo launched this admittedly quite cute super-mini console. Now a Poundstretchers special.

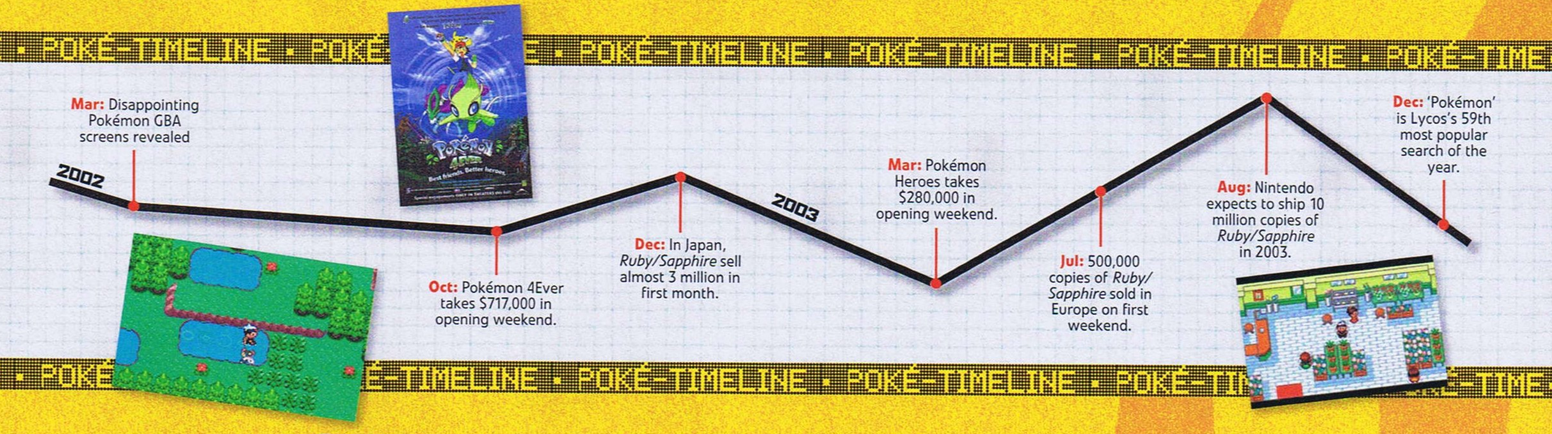
POKÉMON CHANNEL
All right, it's for kids. But this tedious excuse for a game – full of inexcusable looped animations and absolutely nothing happening – is probably Nintendo's lowest point, ever.

CONNECTIVITY CRAZINESS
You wait yonks for Ruby and Sapphire, then find that to catch all the old Pokémon, you'll need to buy Fire Red/Leaf Green as well. Come off it.

MR MIME
We just really don't like him.

POKÉMON: WHAT NEXT?

"We're still waiting for that proper 3D adventure"



OUR POKÉMON VISION

How to take Pokémon to 'the next level' without Reggie having to don a Jigglypuff costume and dance for money.

REAL POKÉMON

Genetically engineer a real-life Pikachu that gives you a cuddle and watery love-eyes. Let's see iPod top that next Christmas.

POKÉMON DAY

Create a new fun holiday where families get together to exchange Pokémon products. Then, make it a three-day holiday.

POKÉMON KART

Sticking a Wooper in a go-kart for criminally easy cash sales seems preposterously unlikely – until you consider Mario Baseball.

NEW SLOGAN

We suggest "Infecting Your Children Since 1995", "Digital Play For A Demographic Like You" or "GottagettaMONSTER!!".

I'M A POKÉMON…

…Get Me Out Of Here! Strand ten Pokémon in the Australian outback and make them eat cockroaches. And film it, if you like.



PUTTING THE 'DS' IN POKÉMON

Nintendo's plans for wirelessly transmitting new monsters to DS owners sitting in cinemas is probably a Japan-only idea, not least because US and UK cinemas are busy installing devices that flag up electrical devices in the audience to put an end to film piracy. But what an idea. Imagine being beamed cheats, tips, new game movies and even special Christmas levels at – say – Christmas.

DS's other big plus is its wireless potential – *Fire Red/Leaf Green* has done good work here already. A mobile, global Pokémon army, free of wires and able to play against each other and receive updates and goodies anytime, is a prospect that triggers our mouthwater. When the president of Pokémon developers Creatures Inc. says *Pokémon Diamond* and *Pearl* will be "the definitive entries in the series", he could well be right.

mistakes. Their new tactic: aim for the new kids. *Pokémon Fire Red/Leaf Green* – remakes of the original *Red* and *Blue* – are targeted straight at young 'uns who were too little to scoop up all those monsters the first time around. Nintendo's hope is clearly that new blood will fuel a new demand for Pokémon movies, TV shows, cartoons and start the cycle all over again. We'll see.

Meanwhile, Nintendo have passed up a prime opportunity to get Pokémaniacs hooked into an online world. When even non-videogame companies like Disney are cashing in with proper internet-based adventures (downloadable PC game *Toontown*), Nintendo look increasingly out of touch. If that all-conquering 'media mix' was built on people interacting, sharing, *living* the Pokémon experience, it's staggering that Nintendo haven't built an interactive online world full of Pokétrainers – a world The Kids would find hard to leave alone. Nintendo top bods like Miyamoto and Iwata are fond of telling interviewers that they're not convinced there's money to be made in online gaming. That's nonsense given that they've got (or had) one of the world's best-known brands to build it on.

Nintendo need to inject some fresh excitement into the games, too, or risk Pokémon pulling down the eyelids of even its most hardcore fans. Our 'Pokémon Constitution' on the previous pages shows how the already-confirmed DS titles *Diamond* and *Pearl* can ensure they're top of the shop, while enlisting an army of excited new fans.

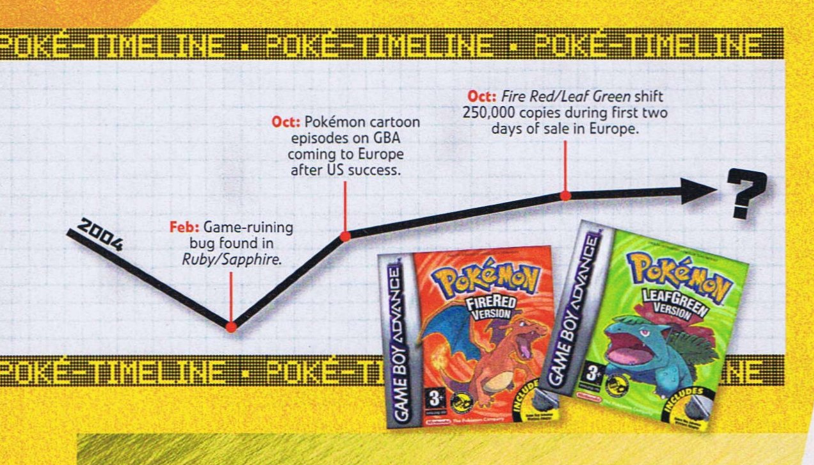
that, we wonder if Nintendo might be planning a whizz-bang 3D Gamecube version of one of the previous Game Boy adventures. Or, in the worst case, it's strategically avoiding a proper Pokémon Gamecube for fear of denting sales of that rainbow of GB titles.

Pokémon is surrounded by successes that have outlasted the derisive label of 'fad'. Look at Harry Potter mania: it's currently gliding into its eight year. But then the boy wizard is under the command of Warner Bros, a company with

> **"IT'S STAGGERING THAT NINTENDO HAVEN'T BUILT AN INTERACTIVE ONLINE WORLD"**

And – hey! Nintendo! – we're still waiting for that proper 3D adventure, the one that brings the Game Boy magic home. Pokémon scampering around in gently rustling tall grass; living, breathing RPG-style towns; monsters rumbling and tumbling in full-on TV-o-vision… just imagine it. Beautiful. Marko Hein tells us that "It is simply not possible to create many different RPG-styled Pokémon games each year." Given decades of experience in carefully building, managing and maintaining interest in their products. There's a certain sense that Nintendo, taken by surprise by Pokémon's sudden, unimaginable success, let the opportunity for *really* big things slip through their fingers. Time will tell if they've got what it takes to re-instate "Pokémon" as the playground's most oft-repeated word – and catch us all again. N





THE POKÉMAN

The Pokémon questions you (and we) want answered, put straight to Marko Hein, Product Manager at Nintendo of Europe.

Q: So Marko, what have been the highlights of The Pokémon Years for you?

A: Probably the launch of the original games, *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue* editions. The games had an incredibly successful launch in Japan and in America and that put a lot of pressure on the European side of the business. We constantly asked the same questions: does this game work in Europe, can we create the same hype, and do European gamers appreciate the franchise? In the end, Pokémon has proved to be a global mass phenomenon, which is very rare for videogames.

Q: So what's the secret of Pokémon's success?

A: The well-balanced combination of collecting, battling, taking care of a creature and the trading aspect lets many people enjoy these games. This is particularly interesting when separating these aspects into male and female preferences. Whereas fighting and battling are elements mainly appreciated by boys, girls clearly like to raise and take care of their Pokémon. This results in an overall gender split of over 30% female players, which is very high for a game.

Q: The person on the street would say that Pokémon is nowhere near as successful as it once was. Would you agree?

A: This is not at all the case. Over 25 million Pokémon games have been sold in Europe and 250,000 *Pokémon Fire Red* and *Pokémon Leaf Green* games were sold in two days following their launch on 1st October, which shows how strong the franchise is. You need to consider at which time in a console lifecycle a game is launched, and of course you see some variations in overall sales. It is also quite obvious that there is a huge impact on game sales when there are movies or TV series running in parallel with the launch, which is not always the case. Looking at the phenomenon as a whole, we are very proud to have Pokémon established as a long-term success over almost five years here in Europe, with a strong intention to keep it successful in the future.

Q: What proportion of Nintendo's time, attention and budget goes into Pokémon, compared to Mario, Zelda and the rest?

A: The allocation of time and budget is always driven by the importance of the product, which is not purely determined by the sales forecast but also by the long-term importance of a certain franchise. Pokémon games are, beside our key franchises like Mario or Zelda, a very important driver for Nintendo, regardless of the released platform. It is clear that we will support each Pokémon launch with a major investment, both in time and budget.

Q: *Pokémon Colosseum* brought the first home console Pokémon RPG with it – but why hasn't Gamecube had a full Game Boy-style adventure?

A: The feedback on the Story mode of *Pokémon Colosseum* was enormously positive, which surely encourages the developers to consider further games in this direction. The RPG element is definitely the core of the Pokémon universe. However, you can imagine that creating such a wonderful and complex world takes a long time to design and develop. It is simply not possible to create many different RPG-styled Pokémon games each year. Pokémon is a classic handheld product, simply because of the trading and battling elements that are possible between different Game Boys.

Q: Do you think we'll ever see Pokémon online? Meet real random strangers and battle with them?

A: I would agree that Pokémon could be used for supporting online functionalities. It's obvious that trading your Pokémon or fighting against friends on a longer distance would be great fun. However, we need to think carefully how to make such features accessible to a mass audience. Particularly, kids do not necessarily have access to a flat rate internet access or another cost-efficient way to go online. That's the reason why we focused on linking different Game Boy systems together, first via cable and now with the wireless adaptor. I can say that Nintendo is constantly looking into new ways of bringing Pokémon fans together.

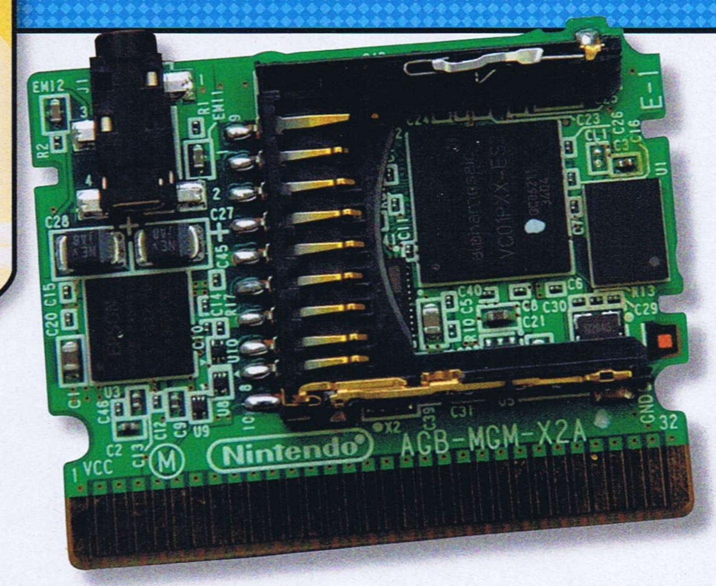




17 PACKED PAGES OF DS & G
NEW!
NGC POCKET
FOR HANDHELD GAMERS
REVIEWED THIS ISSUE!
POKÉMON DASH
First DS Pokémon game – stroke Pikachu now! P.42
DAIGASSO! BAND BROS
Pick an instrument and join in! P.44
NINTENDO DS
GAME BOY ADVANCE
WARIO WARE HITS DS!
Nintendo create another dual screen ween-er. It's a veg-slashing, brain-sneezing, off-its-face triumph!
PLUS!
Zoo Keeper – one of the most addicitive DS games yet!
DK King of Swing & Metal Slug Advance reviewed on GBA!
The latest DS and GBA news from around the world!
Working with DS – what developers really think…

NGC POCKET

NEWS • NEWS • NEWS • NEWS



▷ There's no word on whether or not the device will be compatible with DS, but we can't see why not. Although GBA SP is significantly more portable, we must say…

WELCOME TO NGC POCKET…

After the US's disappointing and lacklustre launch line up, it's been down to the Japanese releases to make us feel the true worth of DS' unique hardware. *Made In Wario*, reviewed over the page, is a revelation – it just feels so right on DS, as though that was the system it was meant for in the first place. *Daigasso! Band Bros*, while not exactly 'amazing', shows off the potential of DS's more social, wireless capabilities, and has proved to be quite disruptive to our productivity.

Strangely, though, it's the puzzle games that have been draining our DS' batteries the most. Both *Hitofude* and *Zoo Keeper* have run away with the month's 'Most Played' crown, which just goes to show how effective the simpler games really are on a handheld. No matter how nice *Ridge Racer* is to look at, it ain't got nothing on shuffling animal heads around with your stylus. There's a lesson to be learned there…

As for GBA… well, aside from a smattering of 'NES Classics' (none of which, with the exception of *Castlevania*, have aged well) the only thing to *really* get excited about it the 'rather good' *Metal Slug* and the 'quite excellent' *King of Swing*. The latter title is one of the most original games we've played since, er, *Mawaru: Made in Wario* a couple of months back, and is so demanding on your index fingers that they'll be bulging like a bodybuilder's biceps in no time… possibly.

Geraint Evans, Handyman



NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath. BA1 2BW
Issue 1, January 2005
Editor: The Welsh Wonder
Contributors: Hippy bum layabout boy, Red 'em up Kittsy, The Blue Flash, Tarzan the Ape Man

MOVIES TO GO

Get films and music on your GBA? All-in-one entertainment to slip in your pocket.

We've seen this kind of device a lot in the past. Seriously, who really wants to watch a bunch of crappy SpongeBob SquarePants episodes on a tiny GBA screen? A big fat no-one round here, that's who. Still, the technology for this kind of thing is getting better all the time, and this latest little portable marvel comes not from some third-party manufacturer trying to cash in, but from Nintendo themselves. So it's got to be good, right?



The technology allows you to play MP3 and MPEG4 files. The data is stored on an SD card, which in turn slots into a GBA cart, which in turn slots into the GBA itself – it's all very neat. Turn the device on and you're asked whether you want to 'Watch' (MPEG4) or 'Listen' (MP3) and it's from here that you can select the files you want to play. Quality-wise, the video playback isn't that great (better than on other devices, sure but still suffering from the effects of compression), and nothing that will make Sony lose any sleep. Still, it's perfectly acceptable on GBA's screen. The MP3 player is a little more impressive. Once you've selected a file, your GBA can go into sleep mode, saving on battery power and, according to Nintendo, delivering a whopping 15 hours battery life.





◁ Your media files go on the blue card. Push that into a special GBA cart and slap it all into your GBA. Job done!

MANGA MELEE

Prepare for anime action.

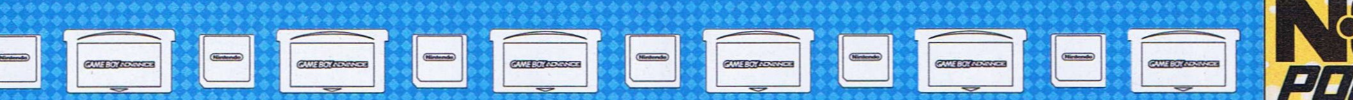


△ A *Smash Bros*-style battle in the palm of your hand. We wants…

Based on the popular Shonen Jump comic in Japan (home to many of the best series, including the likes of Yu-Gi-Oh!, Dragon Ball Z and Naruto) *Jump! Superstars* is a Nintendo-developed fighter that stars characters from the different strips.

Much like *Smash Bros*, it's a four player battler – only with a twist. You can touch the bottom, comic-book-looking screen to select abilities. The screen shows battle cards in your possession and hitting them can change your character mid-battle, give your character extra speed and even call on a support character to help you fight off opponents.

The object of the bouts isn't to knock out your opponent, but to be the character with the most life points at the end of the fight. Even if you lose all your life, you can still continue fighting people, but no-one can score points off you any more. Less a traditional fighting game, then, and more a battle for survival…



YOSHI'S TOUCH AND GO

This could well be 2D platforming's saviour…

This looks better and better. If you ask us, this is our 2005 tip for a DS equivalent of *Yoshi's Island* or *Super Mario Bros* – a potential benchmark for the DS, particularly where its touch and dual screen features are concerned.

When we played it at E3 it was nothing more than a one-level demo where you guided Baby Mario through the sky to the safety of Yoshi's saddle. Now it's blossomed into a 'full' game requiring you to guide both baby M and the Yoshster across some cheerful-looking levels using the stylus to draw cloud platforms under their feet to and to circle enemies to dispatch them.



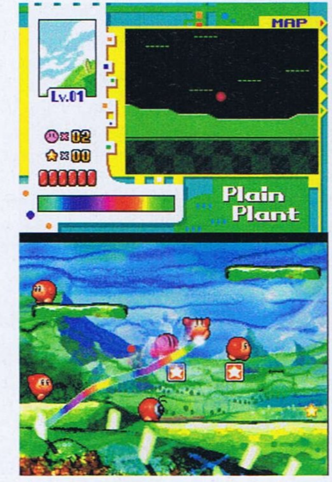
△ Your stylus draws platforms.



TOUCH KIRBY

Go on… give him a poke.

Or rather, *Touch! Kirby's Magic Paintbrush*, a game we 'touched' on briefly a couple of issues a go. The game revolves around guiding Kirby to an exit in each of the levels. However, you don't have direct control over him. If you touch him he'll do a little dash to gain momentum – and that's it. Instead you have to draw walkways for him using the stylus. These make him move automatically, and you can make him gain momentum by drawing loops, slopes and the like. If you want Kirby to stop or turn around, you have to draw a wall for him to walk into. There's a catch though, in that you have a limited amount of 'paint' with which to draw, and judicious use of this magic medium will make the difference between success and a horrific – but still *very pink* – death.



△ More touch screen magic for DS.





△ It's Tempest. All. Over. Again.

ATARI CLASSICS

Or, creaky old coin-ops…

Missile Command, Asteroids, Pong, Breakout, Centipede, Warlords, Tempest, Sprint, Gravitar and *Lunar Lander* – Atari will be releasing all of them in one DS collection in the US this March. All will feature in their original, primitive eight-bit form but will also get something of a makeover in 'Tagged' versions of the games – with visuals being redesigned by some 'famous' graffiti artists. No word on a UK release yet…

IN BRIEF

HOW YOU SAY..?

According to a Japanese newspaper, Nintendo are planning to release a dictionary, thesaurus and Japanese/English translator for DS, expanding its portfolio of applications beyond *PictoChat*. Unfortunately, there's been no formal word about whether we'll see either of these in the UK – but having a DS translator in Europe would be particularly useful considering the amount of countries there are in our overlooked territory.



DS MARCHES ON

Last month it was 'just' one million units. By the time you read this DS will probably have sold over 3 million units (it's actually 2.8 million at the time of writing). That's a phenomenal amount and makes Sony's 500,000 PSPs *shipped* by the end of December seem a bit on the lame side. In a recent Nintendo statement to the Tokyo headquarters of the Foreign Correspondents Club, Satoru Iwata re-affirmed his faith that Nintendo wouldn't lose out to Sony in the handheld battle saying "the old formula for success – the combination of high-spec games consoles and advanced graphics – is no longer working. We need to create a new proposal for gamers. Nintendo DS is our answer to that challenge…"

WARIO AWARDED

Mawaru: Made in Wario was recently awarded with one of Japan's most prestigious media awards. Beating over 200 submissions for the Entertainment Category in the Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs' Media Art Festival, it was recognised for its wide-ranging appeal and innovative design. *Mawaru*, which is motion-sensitive and is controlled by tilting and rotating the GBA, saw off music videos, rival games and websites for the award. It will be released in Europe in March. Get it in!





ALL SYSTEMS GO!

1.2 million sales by December means gamers love the Nintendo DS. But what do the people who make the games think?

It was the 20th of January last year when Nintendo finally stopped teasing us about an "unconventional new hardware project", and formally announced Nintendo DS. It was a big announcement – but not half as eye-opening as watching Americans skipping out of stores with a carrier bag full of finished console, just *ten months* later.

That's fast. Almost *too* fast, in fact, for the people meant to be bringing you twin-screened, stylused-up games. It's easy to imagine that, long before that January press release, Nintendo were whispering secrets into the trembling ears of developers and freely handing out the kit needed to get started on DS games. But the special shield of secrecy was working overtime on DS – as Ruud van de Moosdijk of DS developers Engine Software recalls.

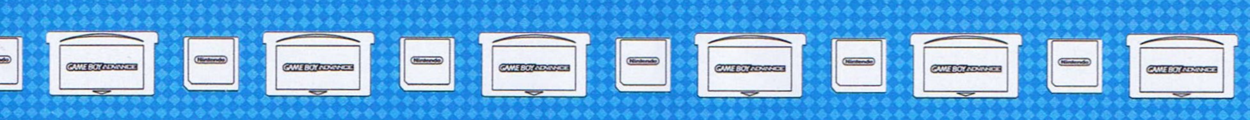
"We knew *something* was going on," he says. "Nintendo of America send everyone a regular mail that keeps us informed when they're working on something. But concrete information on Nintendo DS? Somehow, the press got it earlier than we did." Another coder moans that, before January, "we didn't even know it was a handheld console".

> **"NINTENDO WERE WHISPERING SECRETS INTO THE TREMBLING EARS OF DEVELOPERS"**

Of course, not everyone outside Nintendo HQ was kept in the dark. Two or three of Nintendo's "favoured" friends were probably working on DS back in 2003. It's easy to guess who from the video of impressed coders – EA, Sega, Square, Konami – that Nintendo showed at May 2004's E3 expo. But whoever the privileged few were, they must have been let in on the secret early or those American shoppers would have been staring at empty game shelves. "Based on when we received the kit, there's no way we would have been able to develop a DS game in time for launch," says Ruud. "Impossible."

Ruud was actually one of the lucky ones, bagging a DS dev kit – the raw guts of a DS, used to make the games – just after E3 in May. "I understand from my fellow developers that it was quite tough at the time to get one," he says. It still is: most of the developers we rang in early December were still waiting for theirs. One was jumping up and down because the customs people had locked up his DS for a week-and-a-half; another had no dev kit, but a meaty deduction from his credit card account by Nintendo all the same.

Those who *have* kicked off work on DS, though, are impressed.





THE FUTURE OF DS

The new ideas that coders are cooking up in their big programming pots.

PC LINK

Ruud van de Moosdijk: "I think this will happen. DS will connect with your PC in the same way that Gamecube connects with GBA. Imagine a free PC program that, say, uploads your times from a racing game and sends it to the developer so they can create a live, constantly updated high-score table."

NET DOWNLOAD

Ruud van de Moosdijk again: "The wireless function is fine for multiplayer, so I hope coders avoid using the online capabilities only for battling and racing. They've got the potential to create a huge community by offering the ability to simply go to their website and download new stuff straight to your DS."

BETTER VISUALS

Damir at Big Blue Bubble: "I don't think any of the developers have had a DS or a development kit long enough to develop something that is really specifically developed for DS and its potential. The games out now are quite good, but far away from what you can expect a year from now."

TOUCH MAGIC

Mr Anonymous Developer: "I've seen demos that demonstrate some very nice uses for the drag and drop' feature of the touch screen – sliding objects around the screen with the stylus. The potential comes from the screen being made for kids, so you can really scratch it with the stylus."

They might not like the look of the console ("It's like that old GBA," one coder spat), but they're impressed with what it can do. "We were quite surprised as we expected it to be less powerful than we originally thought," says Mark Crane at Pocketeers, an official DS developer from the UK. Playing around with DS, he's found that 3D games will be much faster and more detailed than he expected. "It's easier developing for DS than Game Boy Advance," he says.

Nintendo has set up a special website for DS developers, and by May last year, hidden away behind the site's password-heavy security obsessiveness, its forums were filling up with encouraging comments from happy developers. "Everyone was very active exploring DS," says Ruud at Engine. "We were all experimenting and having fun with the touch screen – some in ways that are too rude for me to describe. And a lot of people were starting to *think* again. For the last couple of years, we've had too many copycat games. With DS, Nintendo is clearly saying: you have to really think about how to make a good game with this system. The chain of effects it's having on developers is very positive, I think."

In fact, when big Reggie told us in May that DS stands for "Developer's System", his big roaring mouth wasn't lying. Not just because the twin screens, fancy stylus and wi-fi magic are setting coders' brains alight with sparks of idea-electric. But also because Nintendo are being much nicer than usual to the world's games people.

"I've worked with Nintendo for a while now," says Damir Slogar at Big Blue Bubble, a Canadian developer working on a DS game for release in 2006. "And this time, they're doing a lot of the stuff they missed with GBA. Take the development kit itself: the Game Boy Advance kit was very limited and problematic, but the DS one is much better. Not to mention the price. The initial price for a GBA dev kit was really, really high. The DS kits are very reasonably priced."

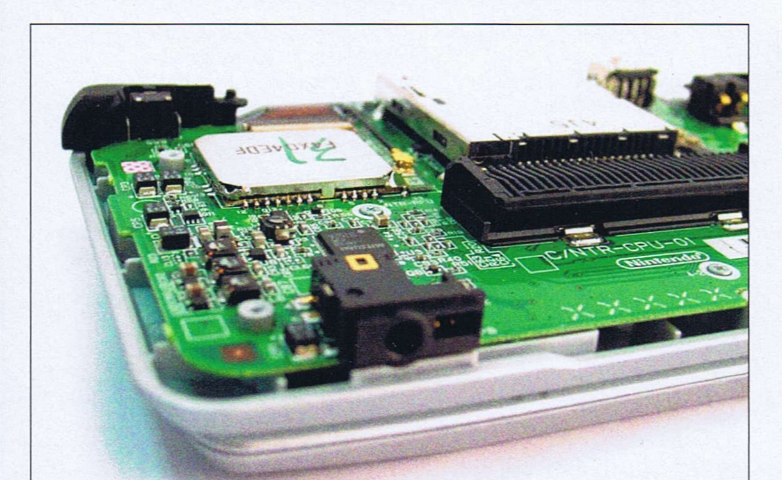
The reason for Nintendo's new nice-as-pie attitude is simple: without friendly developers, this risky new handheld would be finished before you'd even put in your order at Argos. But the smiles and beckoning waves from The Big N still surprised people like Ed Magnin, a veteran Texas coder who had a surprise drop through his letterbox last summer.

"I was invited to a DS developer conference in Santa Monica in September," he says. "I've been an authorised developer for previous consoles and, usually, they invite the



△ Here's what they can fit inside a DS cart – nothing more than a ROM chip and some rewritable memory. The add-ons such as motion sensors or rumble motors that we're used to seeing on Game Boy will go in the separate GBA cart slot. In fact there's a space in every DS game box for holding a GBA cart, so some games are likely to come packaged as a two-cart set.

◁ Circuit boards, eh? Some people go crazy for this kind of thing. In fact, there are hackers out there right now working on getting the open source PC operating system Linux to run on the DS. If nothing else, it shows DS is quite beefy.



△ Here's a DS with its pants down – the black bottom shell has been removed.

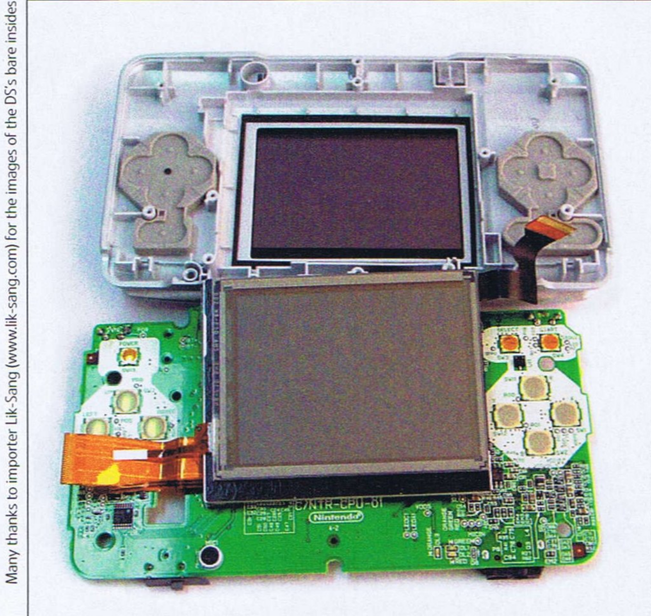
publishers. They don't invite you. With this one, I hadn't even been asked about developing for DS, and yet I still got the invitation. And there were a *lot* of people there. People flew in from all over the world. Reginald Fils-Aime got up and gave a talk to us about how Nintendo 'gets it' this time – and they had dev kits there complete with a price list and everything."

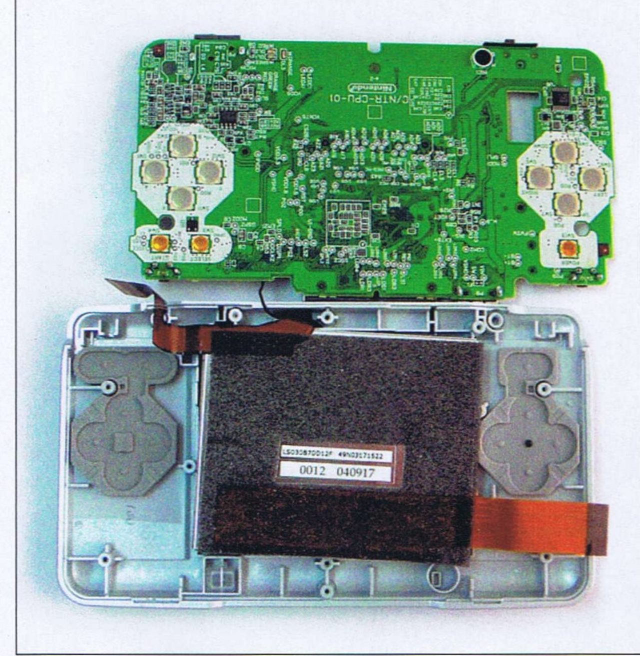
You can't please all the developers all of the time, though – see 'Arm Twisting', on the opposite page, for current grumbles about programming problems. And certain areas of DS's insides are "not very well designed", says an anonymous coder. "But then we're working with very low-priced materials," he concedes. "If something doesn't work quite as well as I'd like in order to make DS cheaper, well, I can live with that."

And the publishers? Given their excitement, Nintendo might as well have called it the 'PS'.

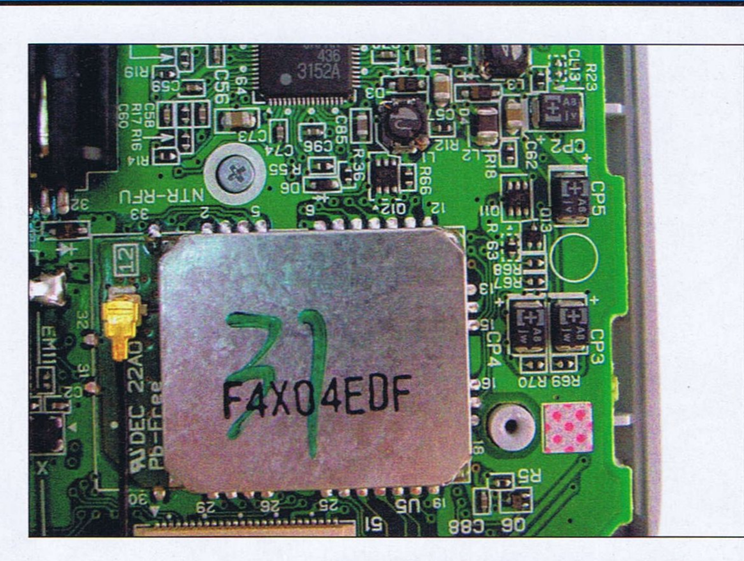
"Publishers are very, very excited," says Damir at Big Blue Bubble. "A couple of years ago, they were very cautious about new consoles like Gamecube – they didn't know if they should dive into development or not. It was very hard to get a contract to make a game back them. Now, with DS, it's a lot easier. The publishers really believe that DS will be as big a success as Game Boy Advance."

It helps that Nintendo have cut down the slice of money that they





Many thanks to importer Lik-Sang (www.lik-sang.com) for the images of the DS's bare insides

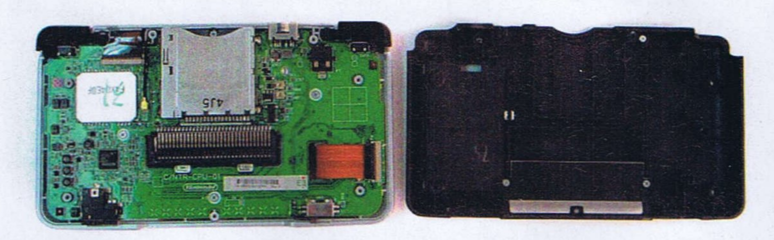


ARM TWISTING

Developers want to get up close and personal with DS's insides.

In July, news broke that some coders were unhappy that Nintendo had made one the chips inside DS 'off-limits' to coders. Basically, the 'ARM7' chip (responsible for controlling Nintendo DS's sound, touch screen and wireless functions) is impossible to use as intricately as developers would like. Coders like Ruud van de Moosdijk at Engine would rather it were different.

"It's still very much possible to create a great game on DS – that's not the problem," he explains. "But if you want to do really, really amazing stuff, or write your own music player, it's impossible. I hope they change their approach. If they're doing it from a commercial point of view – they intend to make money by selling us tools that *can* access the chip – they won't change it. If they're doing it from a security point of view – they wanted to stop us knowing too much before the DS was launched – maybe it'll change. A lot of people have actually been moaning about this on the Nintendo developer forums, so I'm hoping the pressure will help them change their minds."



△ Sadly this kind of damage wasn't covered by Nintendo's guarantee.

demand from every cartridge sold; one of the biggest complaints about developing for Game Boy Advance. You still need a biggish team to take advantage of DS's 3D frippery – a band of six people working for nine months on a top GBA game becomes ten people and a full year on DS. But with publishers throwing their moneybags around, all the big names are hopping on board the DS train. One coder even mentioned they'd seen evidence that *Grand Theft Auto* goliath Rockstar is beavering away on Nintendo DS right now.

But wait: what about Game Boy Advance? Lorie Clay, producer at Digital Eclipse (the people who brought you *GTA* on GBA) thinks there's plenty of life left in it.

"Nintendo have got an awful lot of Game Boy Advance systems out there," she says. "By allowing DS to play Game Boy Advance carts, they've made it very easy for developers – if you develop a GBA game, you can still reach DS owners. I don't think DS means the end of GBA."

"DEVELOPERS HAVE BEEN SHIFTING PEOPLE FROM GBA AS THEIR DS DEV KITS ARRIVE"

Maybe. But we repeatedly heard the words "switching development" from coding teams we spoke to. Over the last half year or so, developers have clearly been shifting people away from GBA as their DS dev kits arrive. Nintendo stress that they don't want their new double-screened baby to compete with their superstar handheld, but DS's success with developers may be the very thing that eventually drains the life out of Game Boy.

Still, we'd rather have new ideas than another set of indentikit GBA platformers. "Of course, that's the biggest problem with DS," admits Ruud. "How the hell do I use those two screens and not make it look like I've just used them because they're there? But that's a good thing, too. We used to come up with a game idea first, then think about how to make it fit with a particular console's technology – which joypad buttons to use, that sort of thing. But now, with DS, you have a touch screen, you have two screens… you actually start with the technology, and you have game ideas based around that."

And according to him, it's not the developers who are the key to DS's success, it's *you*. "If people like your readers are enthusiastic about DS," he says, "we developers go with them. Because we read everything. Remember that when you're writing to a magazine or posting to an online forum about DS. Don't think we don't read it. We read *everything*."



△ Plug *Mawaru* in your DS and see what happens. Love it!

△ Play with balls, noses and garlic. Nifty.

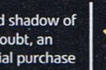
△ Apologies for the exciting choice of shots.

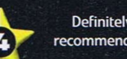
IMPORT FRIENDLY

Unlike previous Wario titles, this one is completely playable without any knowledge of Japanese – the few text-based games are presented in English. The only bit that made us scratch our heads for more than a second was how to switch between Wario and his caped alter-ego Warioman. Feeding him some mutant garlic on the menu screen did the trick. It'll all make sense when you play it…



NGC POCKET 5 STAR SCORING EXPLAINED


5 – Beyond shadow of a doubt, an essential purchase


4 – Definitely recommended.


3 – Okay, but not a disaster if you miss out.


2 – Disappointing and a waste of good money.


1 – The gaming equivalent of a venereal disease.



SAWARU MADE IN WARIO









FROM: NINTENDO	**PLAYERS:** 1-2	**SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: YES	**OUT:** NOW (JAP) FEB (US)	**COST:** ¥4800 (£24)

Proving exactly why it's good to touch.

They're calling it *Wario Ware Touched* for its US debut, and presumably the same thing when we eventually see a UK version. All you need to know is that, by any name, this is the most compelling reason to buy a DS. It stands head and shoulders above anything else on the machine, and demonstrates once again that Wario Ware is the best thing Nintendo have created in years.

The highly intuitive use of the stylus for most games means that if you've played any of the three previous versions you might find this one comparatively easy. Even if it's the first time you've encountered a minigame and you have no idea what the objective is, rubbing part of the screen usually makes something happen, and you'll probably get it right after a couple of failed attempts.

Most of the five-second challenges use control techniques you'll never have experienced before. For example, carefully drawing the fuse wire for a bomb, then pressing the detonator switch to set it off. Or spinning a plateful of pizza and swiping the stylus to slice it into equal portions. Or marking a maths test by circling or crossing out the answers in red ink. Or tracing Japanese calligraphy, making sure you don't let the brush splash outside the lines…

The games are grouped by theme, so one character's challenges tend to involve making circular motions while another's might involve drawing lines, rubbing objects, pulling strings, and so on. There's a collection of wonderfully self-referential retro Nintendo challenges, including one where you play a mini GBA with a snippet of the original *Wario Ware*, and more than a few games that involve being unspeakably nasty to people or animals. We guarantee you'll find something here to make you laugh out loud, assuming your sense of humour is anything like as warped as ours.

A new character called Mike provides something completely different. His games involve blowing into the DS's microphone hole, and are thoroughly disturbing. There's one where you have a man's upturned face on the lower screen, with a monster caressing his chin. You have to blow to keep a tiny biblical dude suspended above his lips, avoiding arrows that fly across the screen. If you run out of breath, the biblical dude either falls into the man's mouth or gets eaten by the monster. It's terrifying. Mike's boss stage involves blowing to help a dandelion seed float onto an island. Before we realised what the objective was, that one might as well have been called Hyperventilation DS.

Being too uncoordinated to dare attempt one of those arcade dancing machines, it's the first game we've played that has actually made us feel light-headed. It's also exactly what DS needed after the disappointing absence of a genuine must-have title among the US launch releases. Virtually perfect.

MARTIN KITTS



PLAYROOM
Bonus fun for all…

Beat certain targets in certain games and you win a toy – it could be a bonus arcade game, or a character to prod and tickle, or a beaker filled with plankton and sea monkeys, among many others. There aren't as many to win as in the jam-packed Mawaru, so you have to work harder to earn them. All the toys you've unlocked clutter up the animated main menu screen until you decide to file them away in this two-screen playroom.











△ You rub the screen in the direction you want Pikachu to go, which is…



△ Different terrain can slow you down.



△ Balloons are the fastest means of travel.





△ …knackering.

POKEMON DASH



△ Just look at him. Anyone got a gun?



FROM: NINTENDO **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-6 **OUT:** NOW (JAP) **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** ¥4,800 (£24)

Back in **NGC**/101 when we had our first hands-on with the game, we said that this was 'the contender for DS's wooden spoon' – and it turns out we couldn't have been further from the truth. *Pokémon Dash* has exceeded our expectations in that it's a much *cleverer* game than we at first anticipated.

It's essentially a racing game. By rapidly rubbing his back with the stylus, you have to guide Pikachu (against five other Pokémon) in a point-to-point race across a large overworld map that's made up of a range of terrain types.

Checkpoints don't appear in a circuit, however. Instead, they're dotted around in different places and require different abilities to reach them. Pikachu, for example, can run at great speed across flat ground. Grass, snow, sand, water and trees slow down his progress, but he can pick up various power-ups to help him on his way. The grass power-ups allow him to run at normal speed over grass. Snow power-ups help him cross snow – and so on.

There are also other modes of transport open to him: Laplace (found at the water's edge) lets Pikachu cross deep water, while balloons allow him to travel great distances by air. Using these power-ups is the key to keeping ahead of his rivals.

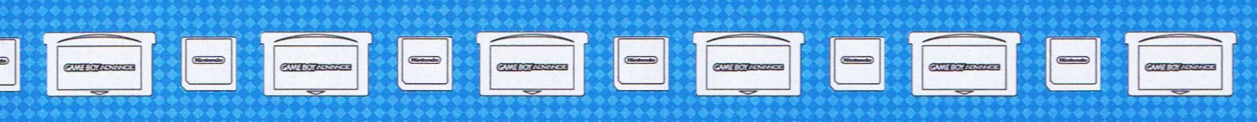
> "A MUCH CLEVERER GAME THAN WE AT FIRST ANTICIPATED"

Of course, things are never that simple. Pikachu can only hold one power-up at a time. You can only use balloons once, and bursting them to speed up his descent to a checkpoint necessitates finding a new set. The top (map) screen also poses a challenge. You can only ever get a good view of your surroundings from the air. While you're using a balloon, you get a good view of different kinds of terrain, but once you're back on the ground, the map screen only shows the locations of the different power-ups.

This mix of rules and conditions means that *Dash* is unique. It's more of an 'orienteering' game than anything else, with shades of *Pilotwings* and *Four Swords' Tetra's Trackers* and while it lasts it's exceedingly good fun, especially in multiplayer. Unfortunately, once you've got the hang of things and beaten the main cup there's little in the way of extra modes to unlock. To be frank, it eventually gets too repetitive to hold you interest. Still, it's not a bad effort.

GERAINT EVANS

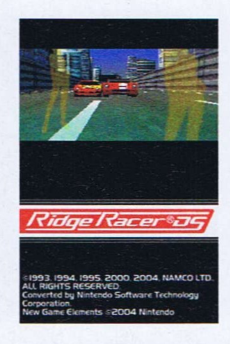


















△ Progress in the single-player campaign unlocks…



△ …better cars. Some of which are more forgiving…

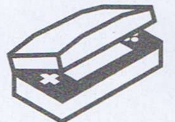


△ …with the basic D-pad control than others.

RIDGE RACER



△ Single-cart link is a real bonus.



FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1-6 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** $27 (£14)

A proper 3D arcade racer in the palm of your hands? Surely that will be enough to convince anyone of DS's capabilities. Starting the game, you enter single-player mode. The D-pad controls your steering and the usual button configuration takes care of braking and acceleration. It feels solid enough, much like when we played the original *Ridge Racer* on the PlayStation, when the controllers only had a D-pad. It's not ideal for racing games, but it's functional, especially for an arcade racer like this. Holding and tapping your steering directions is forgivable in the opening moments.

> **"THE D-PAD DOESN'T OFFER THE PRECISION YOU'D LIKE"**

Visually, it's pretty decent too – low texture detail is a small price to pay when the game runs so silkily and the course ahead is so crisp. Even though the game is so fast and on such a small screen, it's rare that you're ever in a situation where you can't see corners or are unable to judge the course correctly. The cars feel solid, collisions feel right and the handling for the different cars is spot-on.

Unfortunately, it's not quite all we hoped it was going to be owing to DS's lack of analogue input. For us the touch-screen replacement was a no-no. You *can* get used to it if you put in the hours – but why should you? This is supposed to be a pick-up-and-play racer, *not* a pick-up-and-wobble-around-the-track-until-you-get-used-to-it racer. And even when you *do* get used to it, power-sliding and shaving seconds off your lap times requires monumental concentration thanks to the ultra-sensitive touch screen input. And so it's straight back to the D-pad – which, on the painfully hard later sections doesn't offer the precision you'd like, forcing you to grip the DS in frustration. So it's not perfect, but then it *is* for the most part enjoyable, and the inclusion of a single-card wireless multiplayer for up to six people offers some consolation.

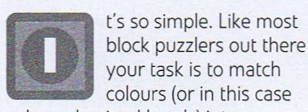
GERAINT EVANS



ZOO KEEPER



FROM: SUCCESS **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** ¥3,990 (£20)



It's so simple. Like most block puzzlers out there your task is to match colours (or in this case coloured animal heads) into horizontal or vertical rows of three or more. You're presented with a grid of jumbled heads to match on the bottom screen and you're able to swap two adjacent heads in order to create your rows. However, you can't just swap any old blocks; you can only swap them if you're going to score from the move. The difficulty (especially later, when the pressure is on) is finding a potential scoring move before the time runs out.

On the top screen you have the all-important score, the maddening driving force behind the game, the 'lucky' animal for that level (which gives you double the score), and the animal count needed to progress to the next level.

Play is against an ever-decreasing time bar. Combos of two or more cleared clusters of animals increases the score a little. Gaining levels increases the meter significantly. You also have three 'lives' – binocular icons that, when you're flummoxed about where to make your next move, give you a life line to get back into the scoring swing of things.

That's pretty much it – there are other modes that basically revolve around the same concept, but on the whole things remains consistently true for each. It's ludicrously addictive. If we're honest, *Zoo Keeper* has been the most-played game in the office despite being rudimentary. It does have some flaws in so far as the difficulty curve isn't quite steep enough, making games last for a touch too long as you improve, but there's no denying it's become a firm favourite round these parts.

GERAINT EVANS



△ Run out of time and it's game over.



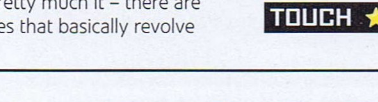
△ Try to delay progress to the next…

△ …level to help maximise scores.





DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆
4








DAIGASSO BAND BROTHERS



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-8 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: YES **OUT:** NOW **COST:** ¥4,800 (£24)



It's a rhythm action game. On that tiny card are a collection of tunes ranging from Japanese TV themes, classical scores and familiar Nintendo game renditions like Zelda, Mario, F-Zero and Kirby to popular J-pop tunes. Each song has a number of instruments that you can select, with varying difficulties to suit your skill, each represented by an increasing star rating. Simpler instruments have fewer inputs, complex ones have more. Initially, the game starts you off on a relatively safe footing, with three inputs: D-pad (blue); buttons (red); or touch screen (trippy orangey-red). Rows of music, four bars to a line, run across the screen and your prompts appear on these. With your chosen instrument you follow the song to its conclusion, whereupon you're rated according to how many 'good', 'bad' or 'miss' timed stabs at the relevant buttons you managed.

The sound quality's not particularly amazing – it sounds like a cheap Casio keyboard when you play out loud – but slip on a pair of headphones and the complexity of some of the arrangements makes playing along to the tunes hugely satisfying. And when you unlock the more difficult versions of the instruments (requiring you to input Up, Down, Left, Right, A, B, X, Y) to each tune the game really challenges you, making play very rewarding.

However, the icing on the cake is the single-card link up, letting you and seven of your friends play along to your favourite tunes, each taking over a different instrument in the arrangement. Combined with a comprehensive editing suite that lets you mash out your own tunes, this is certainly one of DS's most interesting and amusing games so far. A word of warning, though – if you're thinking about importing, you may find some of the Japanese-heavy menus and extra features a little bewildering. The editing suit for example means a lot of trial and error…

GERAINT EVANS



△ Much of the more complex…

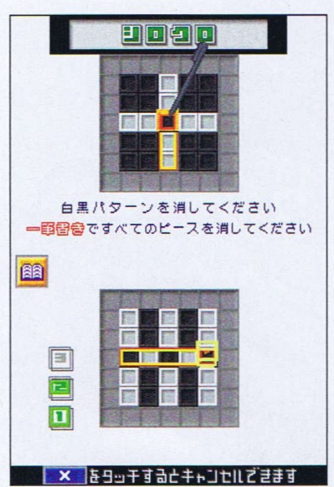


△ …stuff is hard to understand.



DUAL ★★★☆☆
TOUCH ★★★☆☆
4

CHOKKAN HITOFUDE


△ These are all puzzle mode screens.



FROM: NINTENDO/MITCHELL **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW (JAP) **COST:** ¥3,800 (£19)

Somebody recently said this puzzle game is 'like popping bubble-wrap,' which, despite being a quality attributed to practically every simple-but-addictive title, in this case isn't too shabby a description.

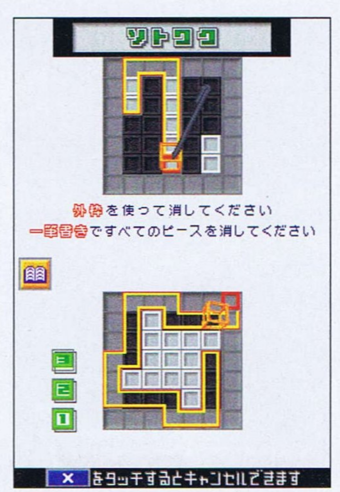
The aim is to flip black and white tiles to make horizontal lines of the same colour, thereby making them vanish and freeing some screen space for yet more black and white tiles. This is done by drawing a snaking line across them using the stylus – the English name *One Line Puzzle* gives a better idea of what it's all about. To get the best score you have to draw a single huge line that will flip the tiles in exactly the right way to make an entire screenful disappear, accompanied by a nice popping sound. Like bubble-wrap.

There's a free space around the edge of the playing area, which must be exploited to link distant tiles, as the line can't cross over itself. As more tiles queue to be dropped from the upper screen, you'll be tracing some intricate shape that looks too huge to understand, until with a tap of the stylus, everything vanishes and you earn a little more thinking time.

A separate puzzle mode offers static screens with unlimited time to contemplate fiendishly tricky logic problems, using the same rules as the main game. In fact, this bit's so hard, the game actually asks if you want to do the tutorial every time you start up. Tough, but great value and worth the effort.

MARTIN KITTS



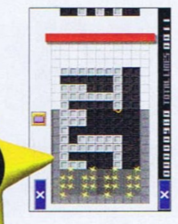

△ Tiles go white – everyone's happy.

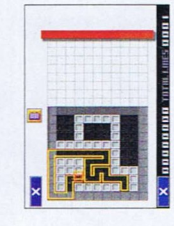








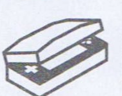




MR DRILLER: DRILL SPIRITS



△ Drill until you can drill no more. Just don't use the stylus if you want to win.



FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1-5 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW (JAP) **COST:** ¥5,040 (£25)

It's easy to see how the touch screen can be an incredibly effective way to control a puzzle game. *Chokkan Hitofude* leads the way in that respect, but we were hoping for something innovative from *Mr Driller*.

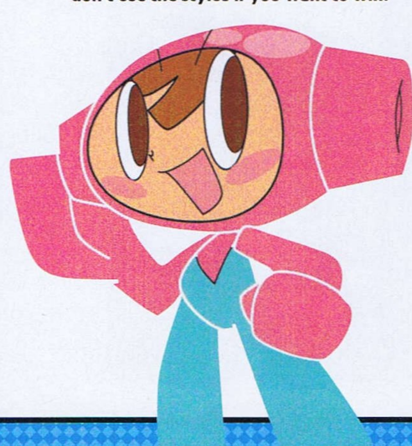
Namco's mining mascot burrows through mud made of coloured blocks, just for the fun of it. Drilling a block makes all its similarly coloured neighbours vanish, allowing our hero to advance further towards the earth's core or the essential air pockets he needs to avoid suffocating in the cheerfully painted depths.

Drilling blocks also destabilises the ones above, causing them to tremble and quickly collapse. If Mr Driller is underneath when this happens, he's history. So rather than a sedate little puzzle game, this is a frantic sprint to escape a shower of falling masonry.

It's good stuff, even if tactics tend to be be beyond all but the most talented of players at the kind of speed the game reaches. And because it's so fast, the touch screen control is pointless. Dragging and tapping the stylus is far too slow.

But it's still Mr Driller, and with better presentation than the GBA version, plus a one-cart link-up, possibly the best handheld version to date. Shame it could just as easily be on any other machine, and almost certainly will be in the near future.

MARTIN KITTS

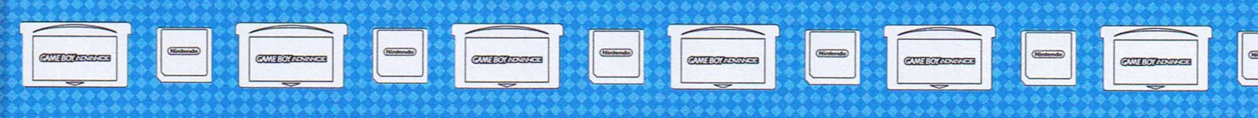


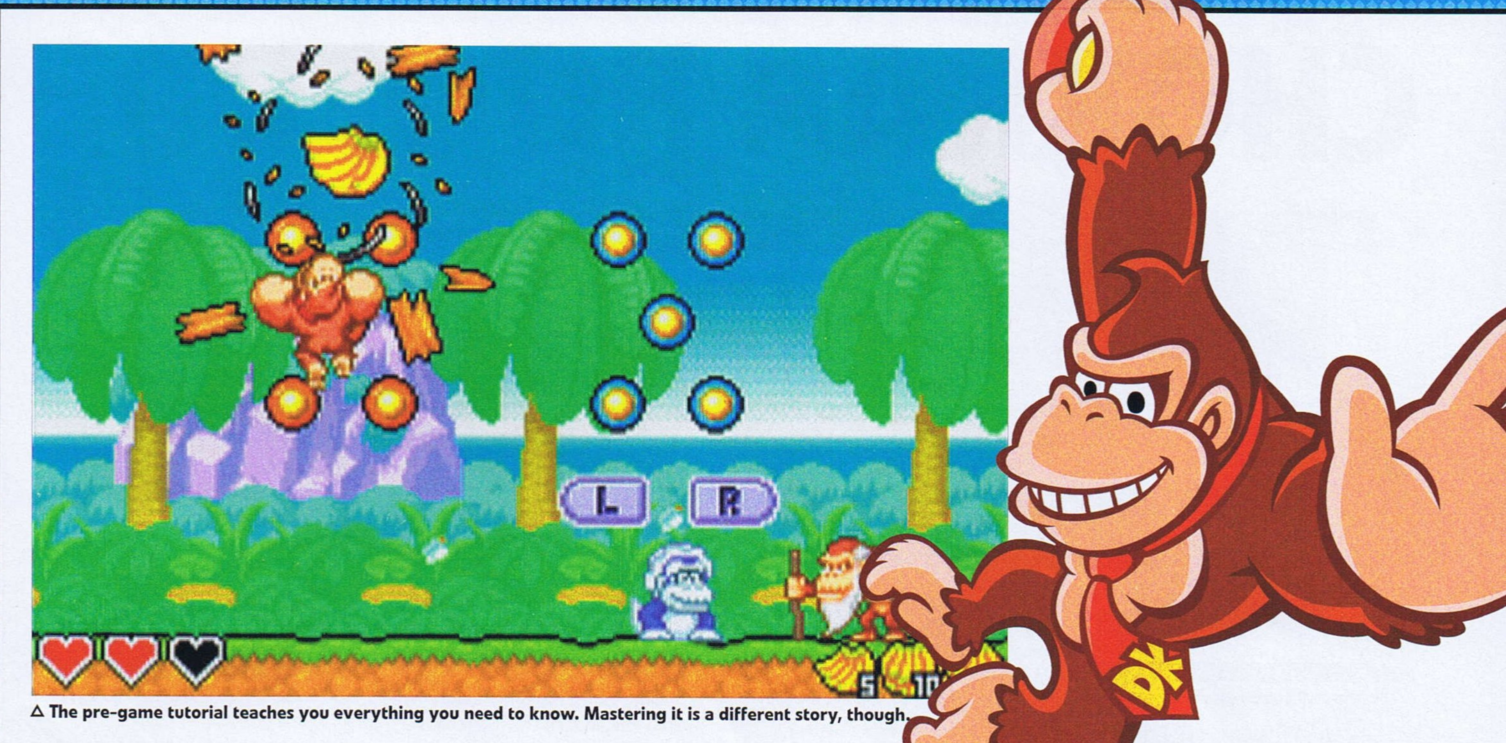




△ The upper screen shows the blocks you've tunnelled past, so you can see them when they're about to collapse.







△ The pre-game tutorial teaches you everything you need to know. Mastering it is a different story, though.

DK: KING OF SWING



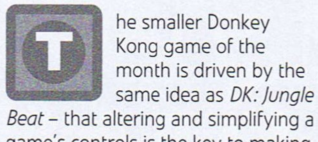
FROM: NINTENDO	**PLAYERS:** 1-4	**SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
SAVE: ON CART	**OUT:** 4TH FEB	**COST:** £30

Hang tough, big fella! The current king of innovation, DK, finds a new way to monkey around…

The smaller Donkey Kong game of the month is driven by the same idea as *DK: Jungle Beat* – that altering and simplifying a game's controls is the key to making it feel original while injecting a new kind of fun and easier accessibility.

With the exception of the odd button press for health and special attacks, *King of Swing* is controlled entirely with the shoulder buttons. You press the left one to walk left and the right to move right. Simple. However, DK, doesn't do much walking. Most levels consist of vertical courses that Kong has to navigate. These are made up of circular 'pegs' arranged in different patterns. In order to progress, Kong has to use his hands to swing from peg to peg until he reaches the course's end. Each shoulder button works as the grasping action for each hand. Grasp with the right hand and Kong latches on to a peg and swings clockwise – use the left, and he'll swing anti-clockwise. By alternating left, right, left, right, Kong will swing hand over hand in the direction you want him to go.

Once you get used to the system, you'll find that it has real depth. Time your swings right and you can gain great momentum, swinging vast distances at speed. Hold both shoulder triggers and you can charge up an attack. You can even influence his movements in the air. All these little nuances mean it's immensely satisfying to use and makes *KoS* one of the most unique GBA games you'll ever play.



TIME YOUR SWINGS AND YOU CAN GAIN GREAT MOMENTUM, SWINGING VAST DISTANCES

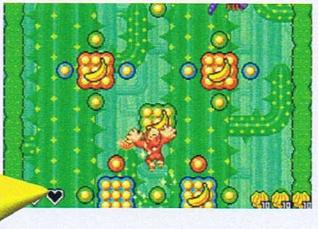
If it all sounds confusing, don't worry: Nintendo have pitched the learning curve perfectly, teaching you new tricks and adding elements to the levels one by one, easing you into game. Which is good, because it gets astonishingly difficult later. You'll encounter levels consisting of moving pegs that you need perfect timing to grasp, dials that Kong has to rotate to clear the way forward, moving rails that will only move in the right direction if you're using the right hand to operate them, and enemies whose behaviour becomes increasingly erratic and difficult to attack or circumnavigate.

There are so many new ideas and elements being introduced that there's always something new to learn. It's refreshing and surprising, and with a variety of single and multiplayer races and challenges to unlock, it will always tempt you back.

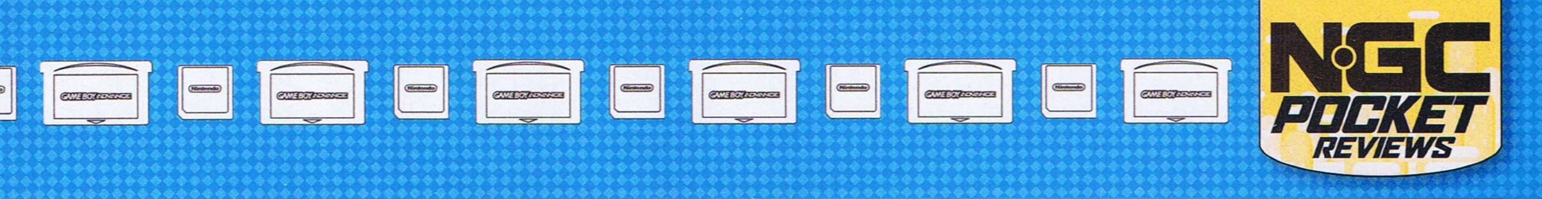
GERAINT EVANS

4

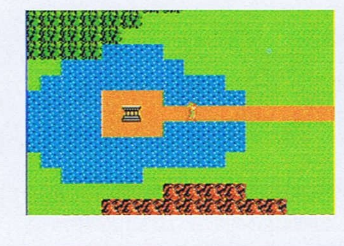








ZELDA 2
THE ADVENTURE OF LINK









FROM: NINTENDO **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £15

If you want cast-iron evidence that Shigeru Miyamoto is capable of making mistakes, £15 spent on this is all the proof you'll ever need. It's not just a poor Zelda, it's a freakin' diabolical one – it doesn't plumb the depths of the Philips CDi Zelda, but it comes close. It's the one Nintendo-developed game that can blemish the otherwise pristine Zelda name.

For *Zelda 2* aka, *The Adventure of Link*, 'Motes decided to take a side-scrolling approach. The game begins with Link standing in a room with a sleeping Zelda – no introduction, no encouraging words to would-be explorers, nothing. Not even an old man in a black room handing you a sword. So off you go to explore and witness the limitlessly depressing world of *Z2*.



Seconds into the game you'll find yourself looking at a familiar top-down overworld. Walk a few paces and you'll find yourself mobbed by shadowy enemies and then, on contact, you're warped to a side-on battle view, where Link can either choose to slash at the enemies or do a runner. The same thing keeps happening every few seconds until you get to a town, at which point it's back to the side-on view where NPCs blather uselessly at you, giving you cryptic clues and snippets of information to help figure out just what the hell is going on. Dungeons aren't much better, with basic puzzles, horribly tedious combat and, crucially, nothing to draw you in or make you want to continue.



△ These battle scenes soon get very tiresome and, unfortunately, prove to be pretty much unavoidable. Oh Shigsy, why? *Why* did you do it?

Suffice to say, this is best left on the shelf, unless you're keen to see just how bad it really is…

GERAINT EVANS

1

METAL SLUG ADVANCE



FROM: SNK **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25

This has been a long time coming. The last time we were graced with a portable Metal Slug was with *First Mission* on SNK's now-defunct NeoGeo Pocket Color – that was almost five years ago, a long time to wait for a follow-up to a great game.

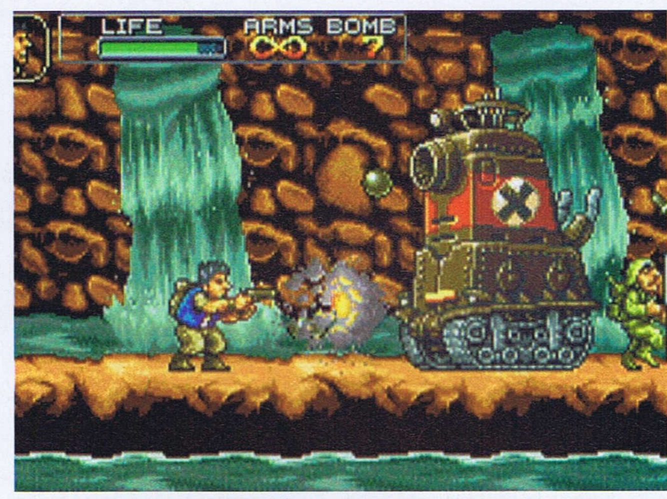
Pleasingly *MS: Advance* continues the tradition of its predecessors by delivering beautifully presented, consistently challenging and relentlessly frantic side-scrolling arcade action. It's an all-new game too, not a scabby old port as we feared it might be at one point. Still, the usual rules apply – you leg it from left to right, firing at anything and everything that moves. Pressing A lets rip a volley of fire, the right shoulder throws an arcing grenade at enemies in those hard-to-reach places, while the B button takes care of jumping duties. Armed with those three simple commands you have to skip your way over enemy fire, dodging grunts and ducking for cover.

To help beef up your firepower there are plenty of power-ups (picked up to the same satisfyingly manly speech samples) and your trusty old 'Metal Slug' tank (as well as a couple of other vehicles) to help dish out meatier punishments to the larger mechanised mini-bosses.

It all feels just as it should, which will be a relief for fans – but unfortunately a couple of concessions have had to be made. The usual over-the-top flamboyance of the animation isn't quite there, the pleasing spurts of blood have been removed and the levels of debris from explosions and overall detail has been toned down. It's to be expected considering that this is on GBA – but still, some squirty old bloodage would have been the icing on the cake…

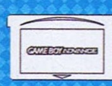
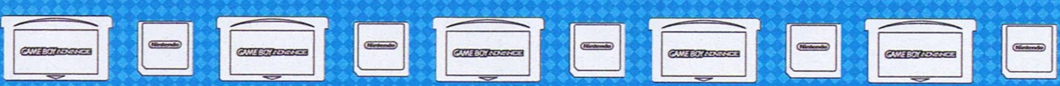
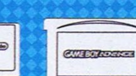
GERAINT EVANS

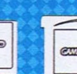
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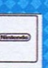
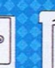


△ Bosses and mini-bosses are thrown at you at regular intervals. It'll require practice if you're to deal with them and emerge completely unscathed.











FROM: NINTENDO **SAVE:** PASSWORD **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £15



etroid is another one of those games that's been ravaged by time but, unlike *Zelda 2*, it's likely many gamers still have very fond (not to mention distant) memories of battling their way across the planet Zebes. After playing this, though, we suggest those memories are best left just as they are, and not revisited.

Like the vast majority of Nintendo's 'Classic' games you'll remember this as being better than it actually is. By modern standards it's basic, it's ugly and it's frustrating. Samus looks hideous and waddles around the screen as though her most recent bowel movement has been cruelly bolted inside her armoured suit. Her movements are restrictive and unwieldy, with her jumping arc feeling strangely unnatural. The level design and enemy placement is straight from the old 'stick-it-where-it'll-piss-'em-off-the-most' school of thought and the fact that the environments are so bland and so lacking in detail makes maintaining the will to continue almost impossible after an hour or so.

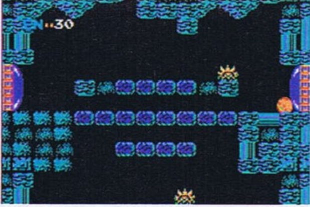
Metroid as a series has come on so much since 1986. The addition of a map to later games helped alleviate frustration and enhanced



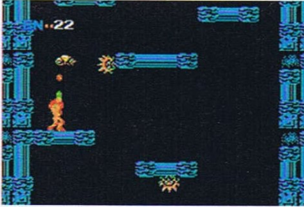
visuals mean that their worlds don't feel as mind-numbingly repetitive as the setting does in the original. Because of that, if you really *must* have a handheld *Metroid* then there are two fantastic, later, games in the shops that are more worthy of your time. *Fusion* and *Zero Mission* (which, incidentally, is a revamped version of the original) are vastly more enjoyable. And if retro-curiosity is your reason for looking into this one, you can get a version of it for nothing by linking up completed saves from *Fusion* and *Prime*.

GERAINT EVANS

2



△ **With no map to help you, you…**



△ **…have to rely on your memory.**



△ **The locations are so bland it can…**



△ **…get very disorientating indeed.**

△ **By smashing up stuff you come across, you can improve the length and power of your whip. If you die, it's never hard to find replacement upgrades.**



△ **The clock is easily the best secondary weapon. It stops time for…**



△ **…a short period, which makes battling some bosses almost too easy.**

CASTLEVANIA



FROM: KONAMI **SAVE:** NONE **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £15



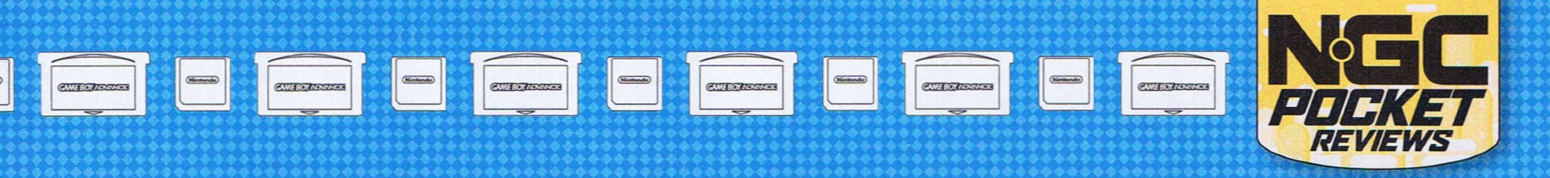
trangely enough, this has aged (comparatively) well compared to the likes of *Metroid*. In fact, if we had to choose between this and the Nintendo classic, this would get our vote every time – joining *Super Mario Bros* and, maybe, *Donkey Kong* and *Xevious* as one of the few games in the Classic series actually worth your consideration.

Visually, it's not looking too shabby either. It all looks recognisably NES, but there's plenty of detail in there, which makes us feel a little ashamed that we didn't appreciate it as much as we should have done way back when. Even by today's standards this is a really solidly designed side-scrolling action game and can certainly put some of the recent muck (like *Shrek 2: Beg For Mercy*) to shame. The classic Castlevania formula is all present and correct: you take control of Simon Belmont on his journey to face off against the Count and enter a castle comprising of a series of levels. On the way through the castle, you can hack at candle fixtures and other furniture to dig out whip-enhancing upgrades and many secondary weapons, like time-stopping clocks, boomerangs and throwing knives. All these help you defeat the neverending army of bats, ghosts, wolves – whatever. At the end of each level you have to face off against a boss before progressing to the next.

Our only major gripe with the game is that, just like its predecessor, there's no save, so if you want to finish the game, you're going to have to do it in one sitting. We can appreciate Nintendo's desire to keep it in its original form, but it would have been nice to have had the option for those of us who want dip in and out of the game while on the move…

GERAINT EVANS

3



DR MARIO



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES
SAVE: ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £15



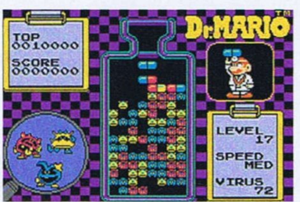
Maybe we're alone in this line of thinking, but as far as we're concerned *Dr Mario* is a waste of space. Seriously. We couldn't be bothered with this crappy little puzzle game when it reared its ugly face the first time – the last thing we want to do is have it mucking up the insides of our GBAs a decade later.

Rotating coloured pills around in a bottle to get rid of germs and diseases is not exactly our idea of 'fun'. In our opinion, *Dr Mario* itself is the disease. Maybe we're just bitter about the fact that the lab-coat-wearing moustachioed freak infected *Smash Bros* with his presence, taking up a character slot that could've been used for someone with a little more charisma – someone like Gex.

Despite our hatred for the game, Mim *actually enjoys* playing this in her spare time, the chirpy bleep of the theme tune stinking up the airwaves. So, under orders from her, it's getting three stars, rather than a big fat 'zero'. Which is only fair, we suppose – as she's the only one round here who plays it…

GERAINT EVANS

3



△ **Looks like the doctor's in trouble.**



△ **Clear the virii to beat the level.**

LEMONY SNICKET'S
A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS



FROM: ACTIVISION **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
SAVE: ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25



△ **Use the baby to bite stuff.**



△ **The evil uncle, setting you chores.**



Activision's wretched *Shrek 2* and *Shark Tale* from last month were hardly setting this up for great things, but in fairness to it, it isn't quite the atrocious mess of a game we thought it would be.

Unsurprisingly, it's a platformer, but before you rush off, it does attempt to throw in a little inventiveness here and there. You take control of the three orphans, Sunny, Violet and Klaus, and each has their own unique abilities. Violet can climb ladders, Klaus can swing with a grappling hook and Sunny can crawl through small spaces. You can switch between them at any time, and using the right orphan for the job is the idea behind the *Lemony's* puzzles. Throughout the game, you collect items that can be turned into inventions and other puzzle-solving bits of kit – in fact, the game is as much about puzzle solving, chatting to NPCs and suchlike as it is about leaping from platform to platform.

Still, it's hardly going to set your world alight and despite not being awful, we would hardly recommend it. Not to anyone, actually…

GERAINT EVANS

2

△ **The in-match view is pretty poor, and is difficult to get any useful information out of – which kind of defeats the object of having it in the first place.**

PREMIER MANAGER 2004 – 2005



FROM: ZOO DIGITAL **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
SAVE: ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25



We're surprised there haven't been many attempts at management sims on the GBA – they're the kind of slow-burning entertainment thing that could, potentially, work brilliantly.

Premier Manager 2004-2005 is a fairly decent attempt, we have to admit. There are five different countries on offer, each with the top two divisions' teams to choose from. Player names are all present and correct and there's a comprehensive list of managerial options to pore over. You can arrange pre-season friendlies and buy and sell players – each with a healthy assortment of stats to absorb. You need to balance your chosen club's finances, upgrade facilities to improve the overall health of the club, hire and fire staff – pretty much everything that you'd hope you can fiddle with is in here. In fact, there's so much to take in from the offset that it can feel a little difficult to penetrate at first, and you'll need a good few hours of continuous play before you feel part of what's going on.

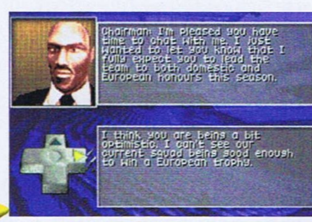
There are a couple of factors that let the side down, though – for starters, the in-match view, which shows player icons sliding around a screen, isn't as functional as it should be. You can't see which player is on the ball, for example. It's hard to see just *why* certain tactics are or aren't working. True, most of the information you need can be seen by accessing stat screens but this hardly gives you the same feeling of involvement.

Furthermore, the outcome of the games can often be so unrealistic that it shatters the illusion of what you're doing. Insane 5-3, 4-4, 5-0 scores occur with alarming regularity, which, well, is just plain daft. It's a shame, because otherwise, this isn't a bad effort.

GERAINT EVANS

3





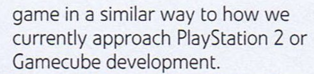
△ **This is the chairman for each team.**



△ **You have to love those menu screens.**

UP CLOSE *AND PERSONAL*

After last month's excellent Feel the Magic – to be called Project Rub in Europe – we had a word with the game's Producer, Sonic Team's Yojiro Ogawa, about how the whole thing came about…



How did Nintendo approach you with the concept of DS? What was your reaction to the new hardware?
We were given the specs and features of DS in late 2003. The passion shown in Nintendo's presentation at that time was so inspiring, and the hardware specs were so challenging that it really stirred enthusiasm in our designers. We quickly came to a decision that we, as Sega, would attempt to develop titles for it.

We were surprised when we saw the machine – surprised at the difference between what we imagined DS would be like (based on the initial specs) and what we touched. We had to rethink everything we'd been planning until that point.

How easy is DS to develop games for? How much help have Nintendo given you to get to grips with the machine's unique features?
Nintendo gave us examples of how best to utilise the functions of the DS. We felt that we needed to excel in what we were doing – to create something beyond our imagination – and the support we got from Nintendo on this was very generous, and so development was done relatively smoothly.

Initially, we had no idea whether we would need staff who specialised in 2D graphics or who could create 3D models. We weren't certain if we'd have to go back to developing games the way we did a generation ago or whether to approach development the way we do now. In the end we found we could create the game in a similar way to how we currently approach PlayStation 2 or Gamecube development.

The ability to blow into the microphone's innovative – how did it come about?
Basically, [Yuji] Naka and co. came up with the idea. We weren't sure how to realise it, but when we asked the programmers' advice, they created it at once. We had lots of great ideas that we never used. As we developed the title we tried to include as many DS functions as possible, so that users would be able to interact with the DS with their body as much as possible.

How difficult will it be to keep making such unique games?
Because DS is pleasing to touch, and the features are unique, we don't think it will be too difficult. The team members finished *[Project Rub]* quickly and without incident, and we did not regard it as being that hard. The only problem was that we had so many ideas that the hardware made possible, compared to the capabilities of existing game hardware. Use of the two screens, for example, differed in subtle ways depending on certain scenes, so we hope that these aspects will serve as a kind of benchmark for development of other games on the hardware for years to come. Developing for DS was really good for us – we specialise in creating 3D visual elements, so it made a change.

> **"THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS THAT WE HAD SO MANY IDEAS THAT THE HARDWARE MADE POSSIBLE"**

What were your influences when you came up with the distinctive art style?
There was no specific influence. The first draft that the director, Yoshinaga, submitted suggested that we shouldn't 'limit' characters, that we wanted to make the game as universal as possible. When we thought about how best to depict the hero and heroine universally, we felt most comfortable describing them through silhouettes. Also, one of the concepts this time was: 'keep speech lines to a minimum!' This is because we wanted to create something as universal as possible, just as we did with older games such as *Sonic the Hedgehog* or *NiGHTS* – realising with hindsight that that we wrote too many scripts in *PSO Episode III*!

In the game, you have to pick scorpions off the girl's back. How far would you go to impress a girl?
I was told by my wife that she wanted a child – we have got two children now. This was a challenge more difficult than removing scorpions! I am always busy with a lot of work, but I feel I managed it successfully! My ambition is to have 98 more children so I will have a family of 102.

Have you seen any other DS games? Which ones are you looking forward to trying?
I've played all the DS software that's on sale. *Daigasso! Band Brothers* was fun. From my point of view – someone who has the experience of creating *PSO* and knowing the difficulties of wireless communication – DS's wireless capabilities are frighteningly good. I believe many unique games will be developed by fusing wireless and new functions. As for the game I am looking forward to? It's *Sonic DS* – I expect it to be released soon…



△ The silhouettes are there to make the game universally appealing.


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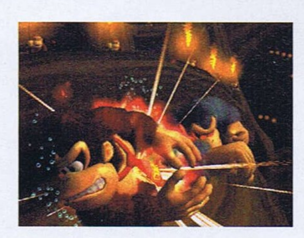
OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS









DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

Get more mileage out of those Konga bongos with DK's platformer. P54





NFL STREET 2

Running up walls, pounding the opposing team and generally causing a ruck, all in the name of sport. And when we've finished rioting at the footie, this is how we chill out! Heh. P60



DK: KING OF SWING

Getting to grips with the great ape's GBA adventure is simple – he'll be moving pianos and drinking tea next. P46



SAWARU MADE IN WARIO

Mawaru had us spinning our GBAs. Now Wario's got us playing more of his strange games on DS. P40

AND...

HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the most comprehensive on Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you loads of detail. We don't rest until we've played a game enough to pinpoint ALL of its strengths and weaknesses, and be able to deliver the most honest, no-nonsense verdicts around.



BATEN KAITOS

Incredibly beautiful card-based RPG from the people behind *Tales of Symphonia* – with possibly the worst dialogue *ever.* P68



MARIO PARTY 6

Introducing a twist to the series, this one comes with a microphone. In *Mario Party,* everyone can hear you cry… P64

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this game is crud.

25-49
A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.



THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you…

PROS AND CONS
Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with some quick plus and minus points.



- Far more freeform.
- Can be social events.

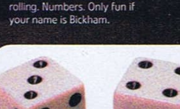
(–)

- Nerdy! *Ubernerdy!*
- Lots of expensive books to buy.
- Need friends.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suitable suggestions here.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Board Wargames
Geeksoft
NGC/D4, 52%
Hundreds of tin soldiers. Dice rolling. Numbers. Only fun if your name is Bickham.




VISUALS AND SOUNDS
Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY
How well does the game make use of the Gamecube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN
Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? This is where you'll find out for sure…

0 VISUALS
It's all done in your head. All you can see are other nerds.

5 SOUNDS
People talking. The clatter of strange-shaped dice.

9 MASTERY
Actually, it's really good fun, and very sociable too.

10 LIFESPAN
Games can last for years. Literally. You'll never see the end.

VERDICT
We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict as to whether you should bother purchasing a game.

VERDICT
Traditional Roleplaying is the geekiest thing anyone can do. Don't tell prospective dates you like it. But it's fun.

NGC **63**

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Getting together for a real-life RPG. Random battling? Non-stop battling!



MARCUS
The experienced soldier, here to impart wisdom to the plucky band of adventurers. And argue with them all constantly.



PAUL
His power to transform pictures makes Paul the magic user. A magic user with a water pistol. That just about sums him up…



KITTSY
You know the 'initially nasty but turns good' types you get in RPGs? We've got one of our own. Only he hasn't turned good yet.



GERAINT
*The boyish charm, the RPG experience – he can only be the **NGC** RPG's hotheaded yet sincere main character.*



MIM
As the only female, is obviously following a spiritual quest. In this case, for the Big Book of Spelling and Grammar.



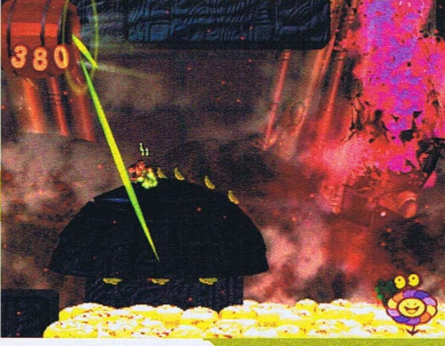

RICHARD 'N' DAN
Here to help out, kupo!

"What else could you do with a fake musical instrument?"

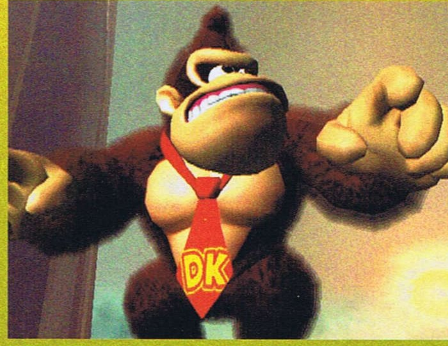




△ These dragon heads swallow you up and spit you out.



△ Lava pits will set you on fire and reduce your 'nanas.



△ The ape (now with added hair) sizes up the enemy.





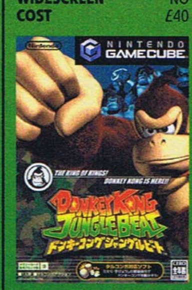
△ This monkey master is a tricky, punch-dodging customer.



It's a monkey-spanking, bonobo-whacking, ultra-violent banana-hoarding simian romp…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	4TH FEB
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40




Whenever you shell out cold hard cash for a – let's face it – slightly unusual gaming peripheral, there's always the fear that it'll only get used for the game it was originally meant for and then shoved in the back of a cupboard. As far as Nintendo's bongos are concerned, chances are many people have shied away from investing in them simply because continuous updates of Namco's rhythm action game seems like the only obvious use for them. After all, what else could you do with a fake, plastic musical instrument? Eh? Use it for a platform game?

Well, according to Nintendo, yes. Yes, you can…

It all makes perfect sense when you think about it. Tap the right bongo to run right. Tap the left bongo to run left. Press them both together to jump. It's as simple as that. In practice, it takes some getting used to, especially when you've had 20 years' experience performing similar actions using a control stick and a button, but then that's the whole point of it all. Nintendo have often talked about the importance of bringing everyone down to the same basic level of ability. Making people learn to play games again as though they're approaching them for the first time. Making videogames genuinely accessible to anyone and everyone. You can really see this idea working in *Jungle Beat*. It takes a genre that's as old videogaming itself and, with just a new control scheme, makes it feel as unique and

RIDE 'EM COWBOY

In the tradition of the *Country* series, DK can ride all manner of beasts and get them to do his bidding.



■ Hammer the right bongo to send this ram charging through any obstructive ice. You also use it on the ski-jump on level two...



■ Use these birds to get to hard-to-reach places. Each bongo takes charge of one wing, so flapping them together is the key.



■ Sometimes you don't have any control over your ani-mate. Defeat this fish, grab hold of its tail and it'll pull you along.









△ Clapping near these mushrooms will make them expand in size – providing a handy platform to the upper levels.

refreshing as the day it was invented.

So it's fun. A *lot* of fun. The basic structure of the game is familiar enough. You have to guide DK through a series of (more often than not) left-to-right platform levels. Each level consists of two main areas capped by a boss battle at the end. The objective throughout is essentially to collect bananas. This works on two levels. First, the bananas you collect equate to how much life DK has – or rather how much damage he can take before he gets killed. This is especially relevant in the boss stage for each level as there are no bananas to collect and so keeping your fruity quota in these encounters is of vital importance to your final score. Beating the boss is one thing, but if you take a severe pummelling while you do it, you can see two areas' worth of collecting ruined by your opponent's attacks.

The other important aspect to collecting bananas is that the more you finish the level with, the better your ranking is going to be. Once you've beaten the boss, DK throws all his remaining bananas into a big trough marked off with medal awards for Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum – but you'll only get that last award if you're especially good (or rather, godly) with your *Jungle Beat* skills.

It's in the pursuit of bananas that the game's many hidden depths reveal themselves. You can, for example, collect bananas by just walking or jumping through them. There are, however, more skilful ways of collecting. There's a combo system that works under the surface of the game, building up through successive jumps and bounces achieved without touching the ground. Any bananas you collect while



> **"THE MORE BANANAS YOU FINISH A LEVEL WITH, THE BETTER YOUR RANKING"**



CHEATING SCUM?

After playing for seven hours straight our palms hurt. Actually, they were positively aching. So we ended up resorting to tapping the bongo-plastic to simulate a clap. This proved to be far more efficient when racking in unreasonably high scores. You might want to try it...

THE BIG BEAT ELITE

The boss encounters are the high point of Jungle Beat's courses.

MONKEY-FU


△ It's a simian vs simian slap fight. This monkey tries to smack DK in the face every so often.


△ His attacks vary in length, so time your dodge-clap to create an opening for a counter-attack.


△ As soon as your opponent is vulnerable, jab to stun him, then batter the bongos as fast as you can.

EGG-BUTTING

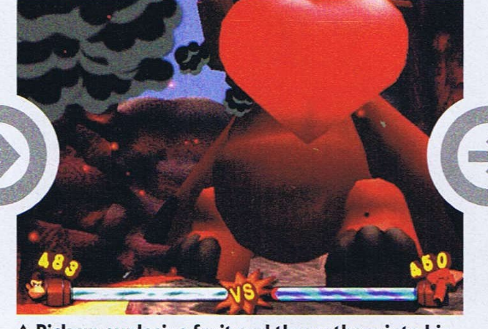

△ This gorgeous feathered beast launches attacks from the air while carrying a giant metal egg.


△ Launch yourself at the ball using these clap-activated bushes, then clap to dig your claws in.


△ Now hammer the bongos to make DK headbutt the egg like a giant hairy woodpecker.

PACHYDERM CANNON


△ It's a gigantic elephant guardian that blows lasers and explosive boulders out of its trunk.


△ Pick up explosive fruit and throw them into his trunk. The explosion will expose his beating heart.


△ Wang more fruit into his heart and watch his bulbous thumping ticker take the punishment.

RAGING PIG-MAN


△ This giant pig-man likes charging and taking swipes at you. He's too tough to take on directly.


△ Hang back. Clap to deflect his projectiles, then wait for them to drop and knock them back at him.


△ Use the bongos to aim projectiles at his face. Once he's stunned, close in for some pummelling.

HIT OF THE WHOLE FRUIT

Sometimes you play a game that's just sooo satisfying…



Bongos really give the impression you're connected to the animal cruelty – feeling like you're truly laying in to a poor little creature. When we beat the browns out of a dancing panda, Mim cried.



One to make your eyes water. DK reaches into the creature's mouth and pulls on his tongue. Keep whacking the opposing bongo to see just how far the violent gorilla can pull it before it snaps back…



Find one of these giant fruit and jump at it to grab it. When you clap, tangy fruit juice gushes in DK's face, before you're whisked of to a manic bongo-bashing, banana-bagging bonus round. Make the most of it.



You can perform some really outlandish stuff in Jungle Beat. A clap will stun little enemies – try jumping at one before deftly bicycle-kicking it into all of its mates for a shower of 'nanas.



Cause and effect. If you jump on a chicken's head and batter its cocky face in, chances are you'll get a ballooning explosion of feathers. When animals die in JB the effects are really nice. Sick, no?

△ Just look at his face. Look at it! Apparently there's nothing DK loves more than harming wildlife…

comboing are multiplied. Make DK leap, swing and bounce like a demon and you can rack up insane amounts of bananas. The clap is also of use here. Clapping (which is picked up by the bongos' mic) sends out sonic shockwaves. You can use these shocks to stun enemies, activate environmental features like mushroom springboards and, crucially, they can also help you to collect bananas. Any bananas collected in this way, while travelling through the air, are again multiplied. As you get better at the game you should try to collect all your bananas either indirectly or through the accumulated combo system.

This system is, unfortunately, the only real means of expanding *Jungle Beat's* lifespan. Once you've played through the game in its entirety, there's some pleasure to be had from replaying to get better scores and medals. This process is enjoyable in its own right, but only to a point. You see, as you play through the main game you'll inevitably come across levels that you don't particularly like. For us, the water levels, although interesting the first time around, were more annoying than anything else and weren't as much fun simply because we found ourselves fighting the control scheme rather than embracing it like we did on

SINKING CHIMP

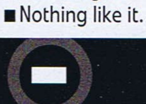
While the underwater sections bring a change of pace, control is frustrating. Moving left or right makes DK work his way. down Leave him to his own devices and he'll float to the surface like a hairy log. The precision needed makes this infuriating, as often you'll bump into enemies and spikes, losing your bananas.

DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT

New uses for old bongos





- Brilliant fun.
- Another use for those bongos.
- Nothing like it.



- It's a bit on the short side.
- No multiplayer
- NO MULTIPLAYER?

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Donkey Konga
Nintendo
NGC/99, 88%
The only other game to use the bongos. It's brilliant, inclusive entertainment.





△ And he's at it again! Half chicken, half flower – a rare species if ever there was one – and what's Donkey Kong doing? Whacking away at it's bulbous head. Someone get that monkey a sedative.



△ Before each boss encounter you get to see the beast in full scare-o-vision.



△ Now that's a whole lot of 'nanas. Get used to comboing to get as big a haul as possible.



△ Even when you're on the back of a beast, you can still hurl explosive pineapples.

the land-based levels. Suffice to say, playing through levels you don't enjoy is going to be a frustrating and arduous process.

This highlights one of the game's more glaring omissions. Bits of it are such good fun that it's crying out for a multiplayer mode. We appreciate that the 'clap' feature may clash a little, but where are the entertaining *Track and Field*-style bongo hammering races? (the ram-riding bits would have been great for this). Where are the take-it-in-turns challenges like the ski-jump bit from the second level? Why is there nothing here that will bring friends around the TV for a palm-bruising, bongo slap-a-thon? What about one-on-one monkey fights like in the boss battles? *Donkey Konga* excelled in its (albeit limited) multiplayer, so it beggars belief that there's nothing like that included in *JB*. Coming from a company adept at delivering a killer multiplayer experience this smacks of an opportunity wasted…

The lack of a multiplayer's a crying shame, because the quality of the game, particularly in terms of control and presentation is outstanding. It's one of the best-looking games we've played in ages – and, combined with the bongo interface, feels like the kind of game we'd naturally gravitate towards in an arcade. It's very much that kind of brash, lively experience. It can't fail to suck you in from the start, and hours later your muscles will be screaming in agony from the constant physical exertion, but your brain will still be compelled to push on (*Steady! – Ed*). In light of this, we're extremely fond of it, and anyone who owns a pair of bongos shouldn't hesitate twice before picking it up. If you don't, well, there's never been a better excuse…

GERAINT EVANS

> **"FEELS LIKE THE KIND OF GAME WE'D GRAVITATE TOWARDS IN AN ARCADE"**



SPIT AND POLISH

Jungle Beat has turned out to be one of the loveliest-looking games we've seen on Gamecube. DK now has finely rendered hair, and there are sparkling lighting effects, ripples, snow, plumes of smoke – everything looks top notch. Why Donkey Konga couldn't have been like this is anyone's guess…



8 VISUALS

Believe it or not, it's one of the sauciest games on GC.

8 SOUNDS

Plenty of remixes of classic themes, and some meaty effects.



8 MASTERY

Uses the bongos, and gives Gamecube's effects chip a workout.



7 LIFESPAN

No multiplayer is a *big* letdown. The medals are a challenge.

VERDICT

A captivating game while it lasts – but beyond the high-score challenge, there's nothing to bring you back.



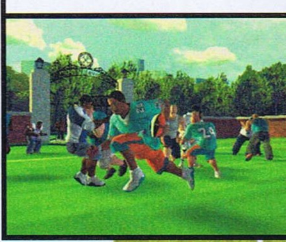

NGC 87



"Hit them before they hit you"

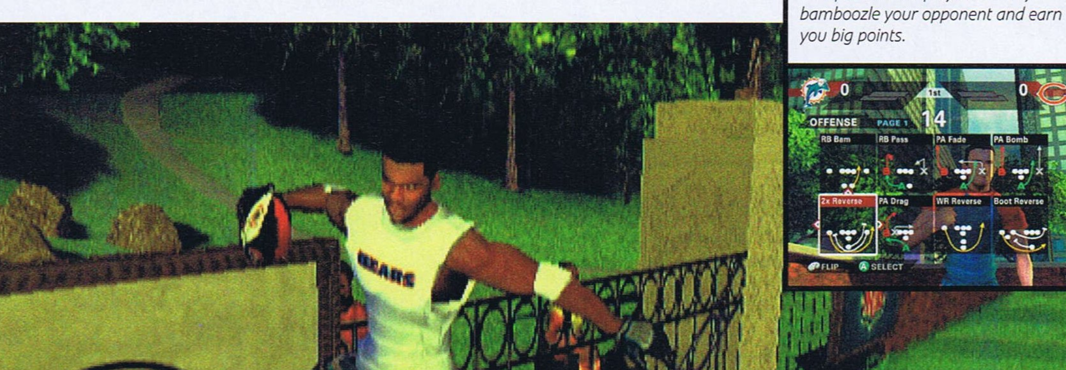
STYLIN'

Winning is good. Winning in style is better. The more moves you use, the faster you'll rack up those fantastic gamebreakers.



STREETWISE

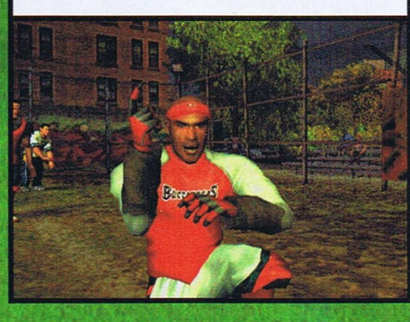
These double-bluff plays are from the special 'trick' playbook. They'll bamboozle your opponent and earn you big points.





SORE WINNERS

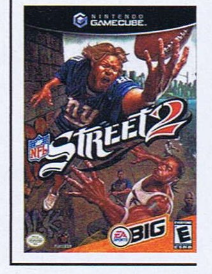
Once again the players are graceless in victory. No polite handshakes – they like to rub your face in it, with gestures, taunts and high-fives all round. Is this why Nintendo doesn't like online gaming?





INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	TIBURON
RELEASE DATE	28TH JAN
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	26
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



NFL STREET 2

Defy gravity! Laugh in the face of physics! But you'd better know your American football playbook…



There's no time to worry about rules when you've got half a ton of defensive lineman lumbering towards you, intent on crushing the last breath from your body just to stop you carrying a pointy ball over a painted line. So *NFL Street* is the American football game that tears up the majority of the rulebook and gives you a licence to run like hell. Or hit them before they hit you.

> **"BEYOND THE CUSTOMARY FIVE-SECOND BURSTS OF EXPLOSIVE VIOLENCE"**

Vastly simplified as this take on the sport may be, there's no disguising the fact that American football is a slow, slow spectacle. *NFL Street* does a good job of reducing the amount of time spent contemplating tactics, while stretching the on-field action beyond the customary five-second bursts of explosive violence. But there's little here that could make us recommend the game to anyone who isn't already a dedicated fan of gridiron sims.



LOYALTY CARD

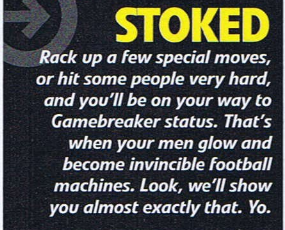
Saving the game onto a card filled with other EA files, we were pleasantly surprised to be awarded thousands of bonus points to spend on outfits for our created character. We immediately wasted three grand on this 'clown afro'

More than anything, it's the reliance on a playbook that puts the best parts of the game out of reach to an audience that wasn't brought up on the finer tactical points of the real thing. The Tutorial mode enables anyone to just pick up the controller and start scoring touchdowns, making big hits or even running up walls. But try explaining the merits of deep zonal coverage versus man-to-man defence, or how to read the opposition's line, or when to blitz, or what all those little playbook arrows actually mean…

If you already know that stuff, then fine. If not, *NFL Street 2* won't leave you much the wiser. Our suggestion to EA is this: drop the playbook entirely, or at least have some means of letting the

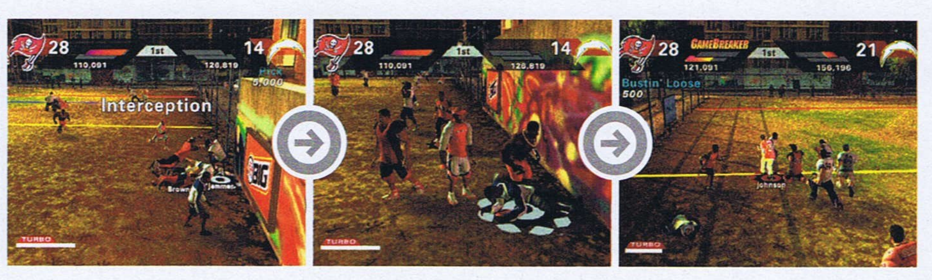
NFL STREET 2

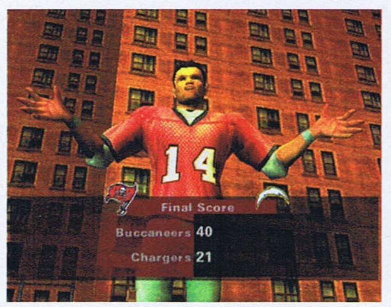
The Shaolin Soccer of American footie sims



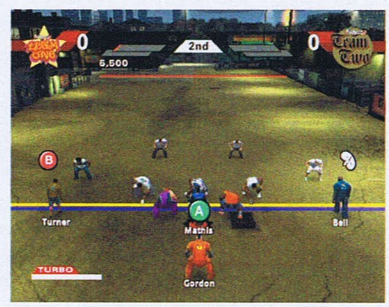
STOKED

Rack up a few special moves, or hit some people very hard, and you'll be on your way to Gamebreaker status. That's when your men glow and become invincible football machines. Look, we'll show you almost exactly that. Yo.





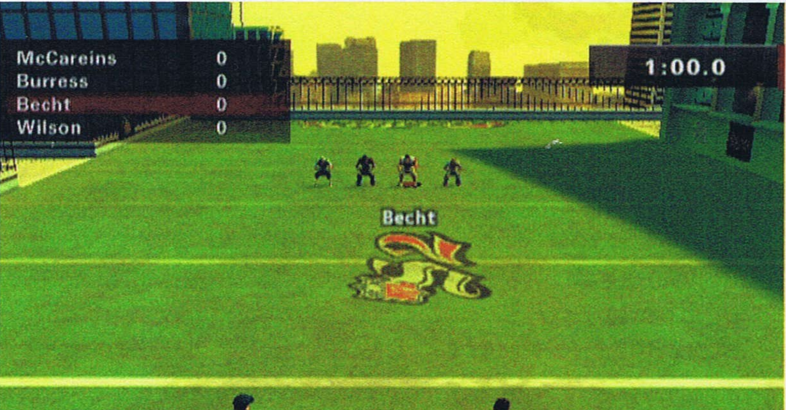
△ Easy come, easy go. Or is he just making a very good job of not gloating too much?



△ Is that the correct defence against this post-up attack? Answers on a postcard, Brits.



△ Get some height on the wall and you're virtually untouchable. Satisfying stuff.





△ Three quarterbacks, four receivers. Somebody is going to be disappointed in this minigame, which involves running around trying to catch the balls like a multiplayer piggy-in-the-middle.



△ This game mode strips three players from each side and has a new scoring system.



△ Check out the guy on the left – looks like he's brained himself trying a wall move. Ha.

computer take care of it all in the background, like in a *FIFA* game. On defence, all you really need to know is whether your men are going to rough up the opposition or hang back and wait for the pass. When you're attacking, pass or run are the only choices you should have to make.

Anyway, if you do know about American football, or are prepared to learn the hard way, this second instalment is a significant improvement over last year's version. The biggest change is the ability to use the walls around the playing area – it's possible to run up and along them, like in *Prince of Persia*, to gain a height advantage when throwing or catching the ball. If you're running out wide, with an impassable scrum of players ahead of you, use the wall to soar over the top.

Running on sponsors' posters earns extra credit for your Gamebreaker meter, which is where the game really loses all connection with reality. Gamebreakers can be powered up in two stages, depending on how flamboyantly you play, and the level two moves are hilarious and unstoppable. And because they're so difficult to earn in the first place, no opponent is going to feel too cheated by having to sit back and watch your men rip his team apart under computer control.

NFL Street packs each match with the kind of thrilling stuff you'd be lucky to see just once or twice in a whole season of the real thing. Multiple laterals, trick plays, blind passes, effortless showboating… There are even some bonus challenges that seem to be based on training exercises, which are most welcome additions to last year's relatively straightforward game. You can play four-versus-four with points awarded for interceptions, jostle to catch random balls hurled up the field by three quarterbacks, or chase the ball-carrier in an effort to give your created player a taste for blood.

Fronted by MTV's Xzibit and featuring a slick, cinematic story mode, it's a quality package. If it were proper football rather than the American version, it would probably fly off the shelves in this country. All the more reason to look forward to *FIFA Street*…

MARTIN KITTS

BUNDLE

It's the time-honoured playground game in which everyone rushes after the poor sod unlucky enough to be holding the ball. Once he's been suitably harmed and the ball wrestled free, everyone chases after the next bloke. We knew it as 'tig'. In other schools the game's called 'rugby' or simply 'common assault'.



- New wall moves.
- Bonus modes.
- Quite funny, in its own way.



- Lots of controls to remember.
- No mass appeal outside America.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Def Jam Fight for NY
EA
NGC/99 80%
Similar sort of thing but with more rappers and fewer balls.





8 VISUALS

Nice and solid, with more background detail than last year.



6 SOUNDS

Bumps, thumps, and an out-of-place rap/rock soundtrack.



7 MASTERY

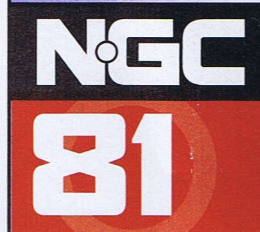
Impressively well put together, especially the tutorials.

8 LIFESPAN

This time next year there'll be an even better version.

VERDICT

Very good. The ideal post-Christmas treat for the NFL fan who has everything.









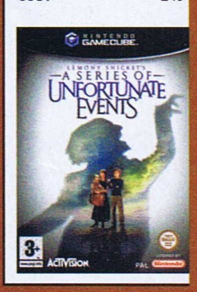


△ Go Klaus! His spring-loaded punching device can rupture a spleen from a distance of more than half a metre. You should see what it does to the rats that scurry around the house – splat!

LEMONY SNICKET'S
A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	ADRENIUM
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	17
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



Even parents aren't as cruel as evil uncles…

In these times of smooth, realistic animation, it's easy to forget that for every movement your on-screen character makes, there was a human actor with ping-pong balls stuck to his body, doing the same thing in a room full of video cameras. Sadly we have no idea who the developers got to do the motion capture for this one, but we hope they obtained permission from his next of kin.

Lemony Snicket's has a strange look – realistically proportioned characters and movie-likeness faces, coupled with stiff animation. The way the characters jump is particularly hilarious, as if the animator was inspired by the way a lump of wood moves when you tie a rope around it and jerk it.

> "CAN YOU GUESS WHAT THE FRUIT FLINGER AND LEVITATING LOAFERS DO?"

Beneath the visual oddness lies a standard 3D platform game that could easily be Harry Potter without the spells. The idea is to collect household items which can be turned into inventions for the purpose of defeating evil uncle Count Olaf. Bearing in mind the type of game this is, can you guess what the Fruit Flinger and the Levitating Loafers might do?

You get three characters to play with. Klaus wields weapons such as the Brilliant Bopper – a boxing glove on a spring, used to kill rats and some of Olaf's henchmen. Violet is the inventor, and the only one capable of operating certain gadgets. She also carries baby Sunny on her shoulders. When you spot a hole in a wall you can shove Sunny through it and play a series of 2D-style levels that are slightly better than the main 3D parts.

The restrictive design makes it less enjoyable than it could have been. On too many occasions you'll chance upon an unopened door or interesting object, only to be told that you can't use it yet. Why not? At least *try* to give us an excuse.

Mercifully, it's brief. It'll be over in about an afternoon, making it little more than a mild diversion for fans of the books and film.

MARTIN KITTS



△ Klaus prepares to hit a grown-up in the stomach with a boxing glove.



■ Looks a bit like the film.



■ Stiff animation.
■ Very short.
■ Very familiar.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
EA
NGC/95 79%
An entertaining slice of boy wizard fun.





5 VISUALS
It's all fine until you see them move. What happened?

5 SOUNDS
The narrator sounds like he almost believes in this guff.



4 MASTERY
Poor animation and a slightly rough frame rate.



4 LIFESPAN
Allow five or six hours if you want to see everything.

VERDICT

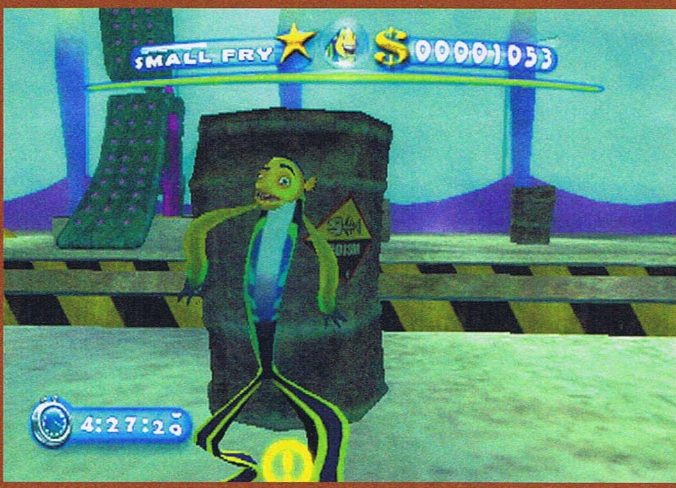
Standard, all too average, Hollywood movie adaptation with more than a touch of the Harry Potters about it.





OH, TAKE THEM AWAY!

Three that flew under our review radar… but not for long



△ Our fishy hero – we forget his name – hides behind a barrel as he attempts to sneak into his workplace, late. Alternatively, bashing the 'dash' button also works.

SHARK TALE

Finding Nemo's unfunny cousin (then losing him at the chippie).



Better late than never, right? Wrong. When a game is so crushingly bland that you barely notice whether you're still playing the same level you were a few minutes ago, the few seconds spent waiting for it to load seem like a shameful waste of perfectly good time.

Fish Story, or whatever it's called, looks extremely colourful and vibrant but would have been truer to its gameplay nature if its graphic designers had painted every level exactly the same shade of beige. It borrows all the most generic parts from the most insipid movie licenses imaginable, and feeds them through the Blandaliser™ until there's nothing left but a morass of gaming clichés that come at you in such huge numbers they hardly even register.

There are 2D platforming levels with an awkward 3D map that forces you to use signposts to turn corners and head in a different compass direction. Platforming with fish. It's laughably easy because you can just swim over obstacles.

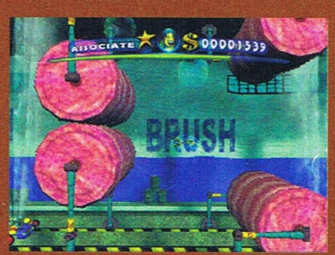
There's a stealth section that should take you all of 30 seconds to beat. There are racing levels where the only way you're likely to lose is if you put the controller down and forget to pause the 'action' while you take a well-earned toilet break. There's even a dancing game, and everyone knows that developers who make dancing games that you play with a D-pad deserve to be punished. With sticks.

Games based on CG cartoon movies should have their own section in the shops, right under a gigantic neon sign that says 'gullible parents, empty your wallets here'.

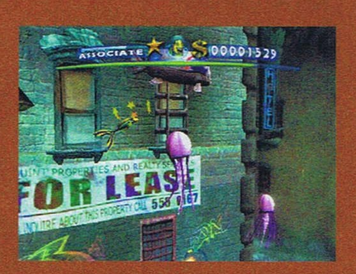
MARTIN KITTS



△ A dancing game where you use the D-pad. Ban this sick filth now!



△ This bit is like the least challenging shoot-'em-up you've ever played.





INFO BURST	
FROM	ACTIVISION
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	15
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£40

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING 40



△ Endless comedy potential here.



△ We like to call this Robot Wars.



△ Battle against a friend's 'bot and the playing area gets split down the middle like the windscreen of Paul's camper. We tried to warn him he was buying a busted car.

MEDABOTS INFINITY

Exposed! Gamecube's most feeble robot beat-'em-up.



Ah, *Medabots*. We meet at last. Your masters went to extraordinary lengths to hide you from us, but you always knew there would be no escaping the **NGC** stick of justice. And having found you lurking, slightly battered, at the bottom of a bargain bin, you're finally ours…

And *Medabots* is every bit as craptacular as we expected. Normally it would be going straight back to the shop, but all we could get in part exchange was a crumpled *Looney Tunes* Game Boy box, with a blood-bogey wiped in the instruction book and no cartridge. We're stuck with it now, and it's no fun at all.

It's like an amateurish version of *Custom Robo* with all the character and playability stripped out. You have to battle robots to earn a trip to a theme park, and it had better be a damned amazing theme park to make this charmless slog worthwhile.

Tedious backtracking and awe-inspiringly inept fighting conspire to make *Medabots Infinity* a uniquely irritating little game. To win battles, you simply need to stand in a corner of the arena where the computer opponent can't find you – pretty much any corner will do. If you can't seem to open the door to the next area, retrace your steps until you stumble across the appropriate switch or fall foul of the many respawning hazards you had to struggle past earlier.

This hums. That it comes from Natsume, the Japanese publisher behind *Harvest Moon*, makes it all the more depressing. If anyone wants our copy, email us at the usual address, explaining what you're willing to swap for it.

MARTIN KITTS



INFO BURST	
FROM	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	3
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£30

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING 19

"Long-winded and incredibly tedious process"





△ Baby Bowser or Bowser Jr? Nope, he's Koopa Kid in this game. We failed the quiz show because of that one.





MARIO PARTY 6

Hello? Hello? Is this thing on? Welcome to voice control. Welcome to the future…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	HUDSON
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	$50 (£26) IMPORT

There's a scene in one of the old Star Trek movies where, having beamed back to the 1980s, chief engineer Scotty attempts to program a computer by talking into the mouse. Of course he doesn't get too far, and is reduced to pressing buttons on an archaic device known as a 'keyboard' in order to display the 3D molecular structure of 'transparent aluminum'. Which he does in about five seconds, entirely from memory. Using a prototype copy of *Word*.

Fast forward two decades, and basic mechanical input devices remain the only reliable way to communicate with machines. Cars can't fly, people don't live on Mars, and talking to computers is reserved for drunken fools at cashpoints and starship engineers from the 23rd century.

Talking to *Mario Party 6* serves no purpose other than

TALKING RUBBISH
Have a word with yourself, Mario.



SAY IT AGAIN
Would it be simpler if I spelled it out? Or selected it from a menu using a proper controller? Or programmed it directly into your circuits with a soldering iron?



EASY DOES IT
You have to talk nice… and… slow… like you're trying to train a mildly retarded dog. Fetch… my… slippers… fetch… slippers… Useless animal. Where's my gun?



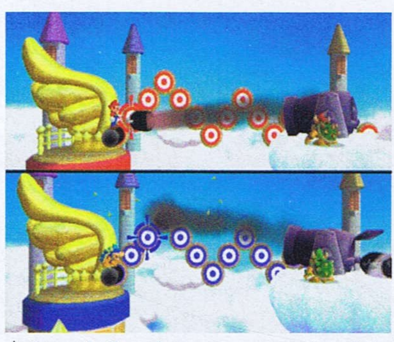
SECOND CHANCE
No, not 'gimme a hint'. I said 'Yoshi'. What kind of a word is 'gimme' anyway? Bloody Americans. Would it help if I said the answer while doing an impersonation of Elvis?



VOCAB TEST
Press Start for a list of comments the game might understand. Even so, there's still a nasty lag between issuing your will and the game acting out your commands.



MISSING RAG
This is beyond a joke. How can a Nintendo game featuring a quiz about Nintendo characters not comprehend the word Yoshi? I will not repeat it for the fourth time.



△ **Cannonballs and targets – two staples of the Mario Party series since the early 19th century.**



△ **Use the microphone to direct your character while the other players chuck stuff at you.**







△ **If bosses in real games were as slow as this, it would be too easy.**

to demonstrate why manufacturers invented D-pads and joysticks. Take the bonus quiz mode, for example, which is one of the few places where you can actually use the microphone that comes packaged with the game…

Two penguins waddle through a spotlight in the middle of a stage. Cute. Another one shuffles past, edging towards the darkness at the edge of the beam. Sneaky. The quizmaster wants to know how many penguins we saw. Tricky.

'Three,' we announce, confident in our ability to count using the fingers of one hand.

'Sorry,' says the quizmaster. 'Twenty is not the correct answer.'

To be fair, most of the time the game isn't so hasty to punish you for its own cloth-earedness. You'll give an answer, and wait for the Gamecube to digest it before either coming back with a polite request to speak more clearly, or displaying a text box asking if you really did say what it thought you did. By which time you could easily have selected the answer using a joypad, thereby doing away with this long-winded and incredibly tedious process.

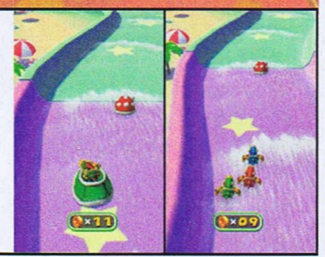
Another speech-based game is a one-player race against the clock, in which your character has to carry a star to the end of a simple obstacle course. Or at least it would be simple if you didn't have to tell him 'move up' or 'move down' to avoid running into rocks or patches of sticky goo. By the time the Gamecube has absorbed and computed your request, you've run straight into an object that any fool with a D-pad and a thumb could have avoided with ease.

It also makes you look incredibly stupid, and not in a good *Donkey Konga* sort of way either – imagine your mum getting horribly drunk at your 18th birthday party and singing karaoke love songs to your best mate. At around the halfway mark in the obstacle course, you're obliged to call for assistance from a gang of computer-controlled characters, which you do by taking a



ON YOUR OWN

Even if you buy the game specifically to play with other people (which is the whole point of it) you'll have the occasional moment when you're faced with the prospect of playing alone. This may be shortly after you whip out the mic and say, 'Hey folks – it's quiz time!' When this happens, the solo play mode is a perfectly functional way to earn more minigames and mourn the loss of your friends.





△ **Say the name of a fruit to make all the other columns drop. The other players have to scramble to get on a piece of solid ground.**







deep breath and yelling 'Mario Party!' It's only funny if you do it in a Michael 'Ready to Rumble' Buffer voice, but then there's every chance the game might not hear you.

Before the mood to completely rip into *Mario Party 6* departs us, we'd like to take this opportunity to roll our eyes in disbelief at the appalling build quality of the microphone peripheral itself. No, they don't charge any extra for bundling it with the game, but you wouldn't expect them to when it's about as well-made as something you'd find in a cheap Christmas cracker. Honestly, it's tiny and it weighs practically nothing. When you consider you're talking into what feels very much like an empty plastic tube with a bit of string hanging off the bottom, small wonder the game has such difficulty hearing what you're saying.



BOARD SILLY

This is the first Mario Party to have an actual plot, written by writers and featuring characters and everything. It's about the moon and the sun (called Twila and, erm, Brighton) having an argument over who's best. Which they decide to settle by making Mario and the gang play games and steal money from one another.

So that's the big gimmick dismissed then. And while it's still Mario Party at heart, and pretty much as good as most of the previous versions, the problem is there's nothing here that you won't have seen far too many times in the past. You just move your characters around a board, and compete to win stars by playing simple minigames that involve bashing a button, avoiding another player, jumping on something, racing or whatever. All good fun, but more than a little tiresome if you've played last year's Mario Party or any of the others in Nintendo's only annual franchise.

By way of innovation they've introduced a day/night feature, which changes the board every few turns. You'll see different traps and features depending on the time of day, giving players something else to think about. Rather than getting around the board as quickly as possible, it might be more sensible to choose a different route in the hope that you'll be in the right place when the day/night transition occurs. The minigames also look slightly different (ie. darker) at night.

Although *Mario Party 6* is definitely at its best as a four-player experience, it's possible to enjoy it more than previous versions if you can only muster two or three friends. You still have to watch the computer-controlled characters go through the motions of hitting the dice, running around the board and choosing options, but you don't have to sit through a

MARIO PARTY 6

It's my party and I'll cry if I want to



△ **"Missiles!… Missiles!… Missiles!…" (several seconds pass before the hatches open and the missile launchers discharge giant, slow bombs). Aha! Direct hit, you idiots. Just call me deadeye.**

A LITTLE CRUEL Games to make you fight for real!



DROWNATHON

Three players swim under water in an attempt to avoid having rocks dropped on their heads by the fourth player. Run out of oxygen or get clonked and you die horribly.



ORB-U-LIKE

Orbs are items that you throw on the board. When other players walk over them, something nasty happens, usually involving money being transferred and tears being shed.



SUNDAY DRIVE

Some rocks have fallen in the road. This is the cue for the passengers to get out and shatter the obstructions using their bare fists. Don't worry – there are more rocks later on.



PRAISE BE

Something miraculous is about to happen! Oh. Round here, miracles tend to involve the leader of the game being stripped of his worldly goods and dumped in last place.

duel between two of them if you don't want to.

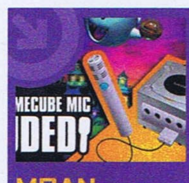
Solo players can have a crack at a handful of special boards designed purely to unlock more goodies for the minigame tour bus mode. You still have to hit the dice and move from space to space though, which is a bit strange. Since this is essentially something you'll want to get out of the way as quickly as possible, it would have been kinder to present it as a series of minigames, doing away with the board altogether. When you eventually reach a minigame, you play against three computer versions of your own character. Beat them and the game is yours.

Mario Party remains a great concept, and newcomers to the series will get a kick out of *MP6*, assuming they don't object quite as strongly as we did to the world's cheapest microphone. But there's no denying it needs sprucing up in lots of areas if the seventh version is going to be worth playing. It doesn't feel as vibrant and exciting as it once did. The graphics look a generation behind what other developers are currently doing on Gamecube. You spend more time pressing the A button to make your way around the thoroughly uneventful boards than you do actually playing the minigames.

And the minigames should be the real focus of Mario Party. They're still loads of fun, despite being incredibly similar to the many hundreds we've seen in the past. Compare this game to the massively inventive, quick-fire *Wario Ware* for Gamecube, and it's easy to see how far Mario has been left behind. A change of developer or a new direction for the series would be most welcome.

MARTIN KITTS

> **"SOLO PLAYERS CAN HAVE A CRACK AT SPECIAL BOARDS TO UNLOCK MORE GOODIES"**



MOAN, WHINGE

Since it has been at least a few centimetres since we last complained about the mic add-on in this review, here's one final moan. When playing the quiz game, you have to press the A button to confirm your readiness to play. So you need to keep swapping between mic and pad, which simply adds to the annoyance factor.



- Masses of minigames.
- Good fun with four players.



- Poor voice recognition.
- Cheapo mic.
- Same old stuff.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Wario Ware Inc: Mega Party Game$
Nintendo
NGC/97 90%
Totally different, and only £20. Excellent.



6 VISUALS

Bright and colourful, if not too detailed or imaginitive.



6 SOUNDS

Sounds exactly the same as all the other Mario Parties.



4 MASTERY

They tried, bless 'em, but they failed in so many ways.



7 LIFESPAN

To be fair, if this is your thing, add a couple of extra marks.

VERDICT

Still Mario Party. Still good. But for what it costs, you might be better off buying an older, cheaper version.













△ Those big red flowers are save points. Note that they don't regenerate health.



△ The people of this peaceful island are enjoying their annual carnival – but there are sinister things afoot…

BATEN KAITOS
ETERNAL WINGS AND THE LOST OCEAN



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NAMCO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	8
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£45 (IMPORT)



Can't see the point of card battles? Namco come up trumps with an RPG that'll change your mind.

We've got a bit of a 'thing' about spoken dialogue here at **NGC**. When it's done as well as it is in something like *Eternal Darkness* it can enhance a game. It makes things better. It draws you in and can really make the difference between a game you can take seriously and game you just can't. After half an hour with *Baten Kaitos*, you'll wonder whether the voice acting is some kind of sick joke on Namco's part. If you found the dialogue in *Tales of Symphonia* difficult to bear, you're going to find this stilted, painfully wooden voice acting nauseating.

It's a shame, because the rest of the presentation throughout *Baten Kaitos* is outstanding. While *Symphonia* had a few ugly blemishes – the bland overworld and curious focusing problems to name two – *Baten Kaitos* is universally beautiful. Locations are made up of a number of high-res, pre-rendered scenes that are pin-sharp and intricate with detail. They're not static either, taking a leaf from *Resident Evil's* book and (somehow) managing to surpass it; the world is alive with life. Rolling clouds swirl and lick the fringes of quaint little villages, vegetation sways in the wind, water shimmers and ripples and fires blaze brightly while smoke and mist billows down buildings and cliff faces.

> "VIVID HUES OF BLUES, PURPLES AND GOLDEN ORANGES PAINT SOME MAJESTIC LANDSCAPES"

It's quite a sight to behold – and all the while these stunning vistas, towns, interiors and pathways are washed with a lavish colour palette. Vivid hues of blues, pinks, purples and golden oranges help paint some truly majestic landscapes, the likes of which we've never seen on Gamecube. It looks unique, and delivers as strong a sense of a magical, fantastical world as you could hope for. In this respect, then, *Baten Kaitos* is a real success.

So what about the story? Well, it's the old 'plucky-youngsters-and-unlikely-heroes-do-battle-with-evil-empire' tale. Said empire is trying to awaken ancient, destructive gods. Empire kills family of a headstrong teenager who want his revenge. Naïve heroine is on a noble mission to warn the people of the land. Humble, paddle-wielding fisherman gets miffed at empire's invasion of homeland. Empire Ambassador defects because… well, you know the drill. Much like *Symphonia*,

DEALING THE DAMAGE

It's a card knock life for Baten Kaitos' nasties.


The battle system uses cards, or 'Magnuses'. These take the form of Weapons, Magic, Items, Armour and Special Moves, each with their own elemental (fire, water, wind, light, dark – etc) alignment.

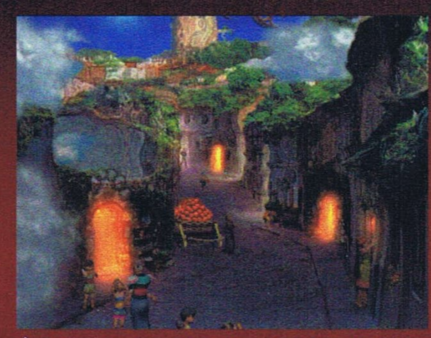

You have to create a balanced deck from your stockpile, to cover as many eventualities as you can. Cards are then drawn at random during battle, into a hand from which you can select your moves.

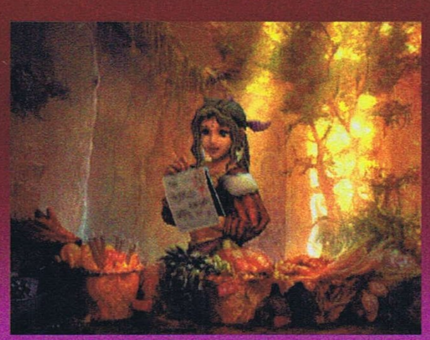

Battles have two stages, attack and defend. You can use any weapons in your hand to attack, and any armour Magnus to defend – but choose quickly as there isn't much time to think.


Each card also has numbers in the corner. For the most damage dealt or resisted, use runs of successive numbers, or a series of cards that have the same number. This improves their effectiveness.


As you level up, you can have more cards in a hand, and are able to choose more cards to attack with. Using the combo system and special attack cards, you can deal masses of damage in one turn.


△ That blue pod is another of the game's save points. It opens into a flower and can take you to a church to level up.


△ The effect of the billowing clouds here is quite dramatic. Every scene in the game is animated.


△ This is one of the game's many shops – it's here that you can rest up and sell your battle photos.


△ One of the bosses. They occur with alarming regularity.

Namco haven't gone out of their way to shake off the usual RPG clichés and, much like their cel-shaded epic, there are times where things can feel contrived, the scripting tired and situations farcical. For those of us who've played through their fair share of RPGs it can be difficult not to wince with embarrassment at some of the characters' random exclamations and plot developments. Thankfully, the game does go on to redeem itself in more ways than one.

First, the adventure has quite a pace to it. It doesn't dawdle in any one location, and simple tasks, main objectives and quests never outstay their welcome. You're ushered from point to point at a satisfying rate, which makes a change. Surely you've been through it in other games – stuck in the same dungeon for an hour and a half, navigating your main character over the same texture from random encounter to random encounter? You end up flipping switches, backtracking for chests and hoping to dear god that the lair's boss is just around the next corner, only to find another, similarly textured, tier to navigate.

Baten Kaitos does away with this monotony, mainly because there aren't really any dungeons to speak of (not in the classic sense of the word, anyway), only sumptuously rendered paths to your next destination, boss, guardian, plot twist or whatever.

There's no overworld here either. Well, there is, but it manifests as a



SAY CHEESE

In order to raise cash in Baten Kaitos, try photography. Keeping a camera Magnus in one of your characters' decks will allow you take photographs of enemies in battle should it arise in your hand. Once taken, these photos take time to develop. Well developed photos of Bosses or rare enemies can net you a wodge of cash.

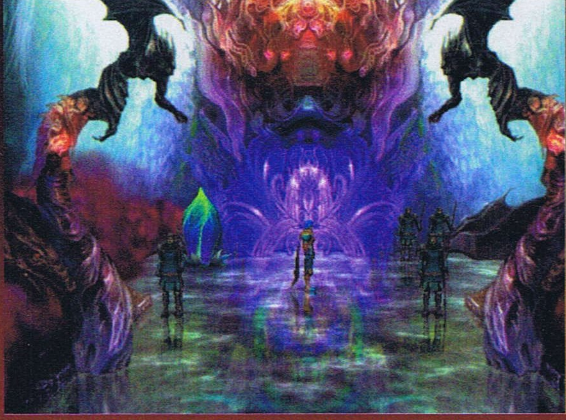

The capital city of the second island is under attack from the evil empire.


Even, the King's palace is under siege – you'd best find a way to help him.



Each character has a number of special finishing moves to seek out.


The visuals are such that it's often difficult to spot the paths ahead.


The art in *Baten Kaitos* is as imaginative as it is dazzling...


This is the world's most respected school of magic – you'll find plenty of good advice here that you can take into battles.



CATCH CARD

Every item you use manifests itself as a Magnus (card). You can also capture the essence of things on blank cards. Water, milk, apples, pebbles – you name it, you can turn it into a card. Many items age with time. Milk, for example, will turn to yoghurt and then cheese in about two hours. Learning how certain cards mature, and waiting for the results can benefit you, with useless items turning into weapons and healing items.

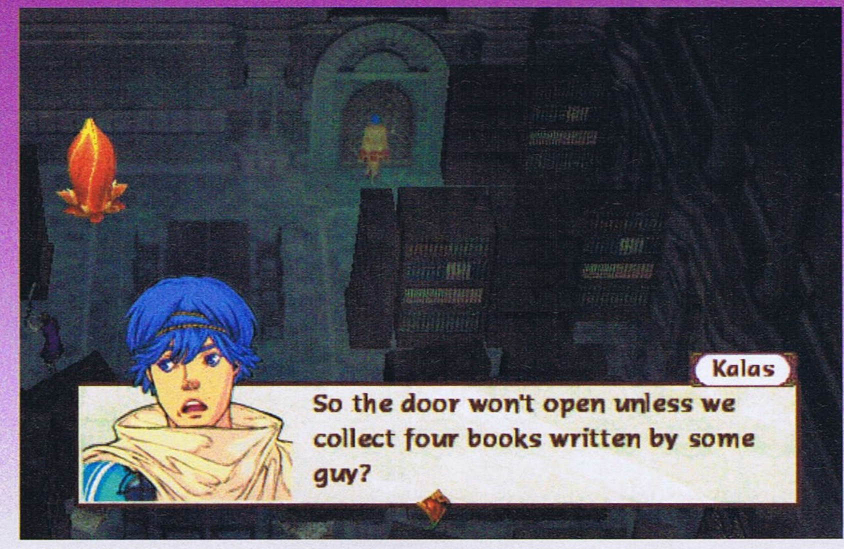
series of map screens. There's the main map, which shows the various regions of the world, and then closer views of the many floating islands in the game. On these island maps, you do still have to walk the long way to destinations – journeys that take you on simple paths littered with monster battles – but once you've made that journey once, you don't *have* to do it again. Points of interest, like towns and pathways, are unlocked on the map and you can simply access them from the map screen. Again, this helps the pace of the game significantly. If you've forgotten an essential quest item in one place, you don't have to trudge over miles of gameworld to retrieve it.

The pay-off, of course, is that you rarely get that same feeling of scale that you do in *Symphonia*, but then you can't have everything...



LEVEL UP

Although you earn EXP by winning battles, you don't automatically level up. You must visit churches at the Save points. At the church you can choose to level up or class up. The former gives you better strength and improved stats, while the latter option allows you to carry more cards in a deck, hold more in a hand, and use more cards to attack and defend.



One of the more diverting quests. You need to find overdue library books that the world's inhabitants have. Thankfully, ease of travel doesn't make this as annoying as it might sound.

"There's plenty here to admire"



△ The developers weren't shy about throwing shiny neon effects around, making fights spectacular.

△ Often the paths are so narrow that battles can be unavoidable – still, the EXP is always handy.

△ Something that's often lacking on Gamecube – beautifully rendered cut-scenes that aren't grainy.

△ This is the town where the game begins. You'll find plenty of advice here in the community.

A BIT ON THE SIDE

There are two 'main' side-quests. One sees you collecting cards to fill in a star chart, the other requires you to find the family members of a dying man and take them home to him. Both, are simple find-and-collect tasks, but they do give you an excuse to be meticulous in your questing, talking to everyone, which fleshes out the game world significantly.

Which leaves us with, possibly, the most important aspect of any RPG – the battle system (there's a lengthy explanation of this at the top of page 70). It's safe to say that it's quite… different. The card-based system may be off-putting to many, but it to dismiss it would be unfair. Because while it *does* use cards and requires the strategic deck-building that inevitably follows, it plays much differently than you'd expect. You have to choose and discard cards on the fly – you can't just sit there pondering your next move. You don't have the time. Cards present themselves in your hand and you have to make snap decisions, both to attack and defend, with rarely a breather in between. In this



△ We're heading over that bridge soon. All we've got to do is get past the guards – pointing and yelling "Look! Elvis!" should do the trick.





△ Straight out of every RPG ever made: this bloke has killed members of your family and, naturally, you want revenge... *yawn*...



△ Even this sleepy little fishing village isn't...



△ ...safe from the clutches of the evil empire.



△ It's worth replaying areas to gain EXP.



△ These kids are the town toublemakers. Make friends with them and they'll help you infiltrate the governor of the island's mansion.



△ What's an RPG without pubs or shops? *LotR: The Third Age*, you say? Well, yes, but we mean nothing! Nothing! To be is to buy.

respect it's very much action-based in that the quickest, most concentrated mind will reap the most rewards.

It's also luck-based. You never know what hand you're getting and so battles fluctuate between tense moments of not being able to act as you please and euphoric moments of great fortune where you have the opportunity to deal ludicrous amounts of damage.

This fine balance of preparation in deck construction and quick-fire thinking in battle proves to be both unique and compelling, and despite the fact that you'll be faced with battle after battle, it's never as tiring or tedious as you'd fear. Granted, the system isn't in the same league as *Symphonia* or *Grandia*, but as far as card-based battles go this really has no equal.

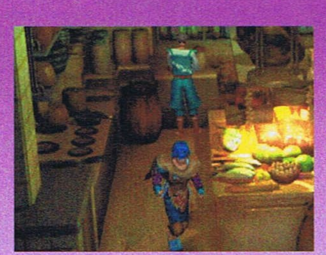
We like *Baten Kaitos* then. The card system, the pacing, the atmosphere and the rewarding battles are all worthy of the 60+ hours of attention you'll invest in it, but – and to go back to our original gripe – it falls short of reaching any kind of classic status because of the ham-fisted way in which the story's presented (a crucial aspect for an RPG). It just doesn't grab you. The characters exude neither the charm of *Symphonia's* or the charisma of *Skies of Arcadia's*, which means that once it's finished, you won't look back on it with the same fond memories that you get with its role-playing rivals. Shame, that.

GERAINT EVANS



DAMAGE REPORT

Baten Kaitos calculates total damage at the end of a turn. Using opposing elemental cards can weaken your attack. Say you score 30 Light and 20 Dark damage – the result will be just 10 damage. Conversely, string together numbered cards and you can see 40% of your total damage added to your attack.



△ After the cel-shading of...



△ ...*ToS* this feels quite refreshing.



- Lovely locations.
- Deep, card-based battling.
- It'll last you.



- Rancid voice acting.
- Uninspiring characters.
- Unexciting story.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tales of Symphonia
Namco
NGC/98 84%
Namco's other, slightly superior, RPG with a real-time battle system.





8 VISUALS

Pre-rendered backgrounds – and gorgeous with it.



6 SOUNDS

Music's fine – voices are appalling. Turn the latter off.



8 MASTERY

Well paced with an inventive and unique battle system.



9 LIFESPAN

Two discs and plenty of challenge. It's a biggie all right.

VERDICT

A visual treat let down by dreadful voice and script work, this is a solid adventure and the best card-based RPG around.





△ See how fast it can run when you thumb the buttons until your hands hurt.



△ This minigame is a stinker. You flick the stick to skim like a pebble on the water.



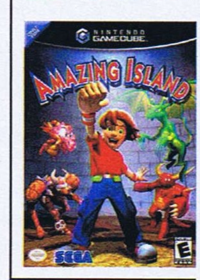
△ Give him bolts in his head if you want him to look hard. Otherwise, just stick a pair of comedy eyebrows on him.

AMAZING ISLAND

Misshapen lumposaurus, I choose you!

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	SEGA
DEVELOPER	SEGA
RELEASE DATE	NOW (US)
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	$50 (£26) IMPORT





Imagine if you could create your own Pokémon. Not just from a few building blocks in a Mr Potato Head fashion, but actually draw its shape, give it some skills, and have the Gamecube turn it into a 3D animated model…

That's the concept behind *Amazing Island*, and we have to say it's a brilliant one. Who wouldn't want to design a brand-new life form, then watch it annihilate lesser creatures in battle? Unfortunately all you get to do after you've designed your monster is use it to play some fairly unremarkable minigames, which is a complete waste of the 3D modelling idea.

Everything else is standard issue stuff. You play a boy or girl who gets whisked away to a storybook island where the friendly Maboo people are waiting for the arrival of a saviour to defeat the dark magician Black Evil. To prove yourself worthy of facing Mr Evil, you must thump the A button with all your might, in a series of athletic monster challenges.

Some of them are severely hard, calling for the kind of precision timing that can (and did) reduce grown men to tears. Others are just a button-mashing frenzy, and if, after twitching your thumb as fast as you possibly can, you still find your monster is a couple of seconds short of the target time, you'd better go back to the Maboo elders to buy a few upgrades.

> "WATCH IT TRANSFORM INTO SOMETHING NOT EVEN A MOTHER COULD LOVE"

The good thing is that most of the changes you make have more than just a cosmetic effect. After you've unlocked the appropriate tools you can design a new creature from the skeleton up. Give it long legs if you want to do well in speed events, or big wings if you need to fly fast. Once the skeleton is fixed, you trace the outline of its flesh around the bare bones, apply colours and other features, give it a truly disturbing voice (a high-pitched horsey shriek worked well for us) and watch it transform into something not even a mother could love.

This sort of thing would be great in a more substantial game. When you're limited to playing just 30 basic minigames, many of which are less than satisfying, it seems like a wasted opportunity.

MARTIN KITTS

△ It's a minigame that appears to be based on *Beyblade*! We feel ill.



- Draw your own 3D monsters.
- Play minigames.

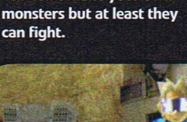


- No fighting.
- No depth.
- Harsh difficulty.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Pokémon Colosseum
Nintendo
NGC/93 84%
You can't make your own monsters but at least they can fight.





5 VISUALS
Nice in places, a bit bland and simple in general.

6 SOUNDS
Tinkly synth tunes and some weird monster noises.

6 MASTERY
Creating monsters is a great idea. The rest isn't so hot.

5 LIFESPAN
Few minigames are good enough to be worth replaying.



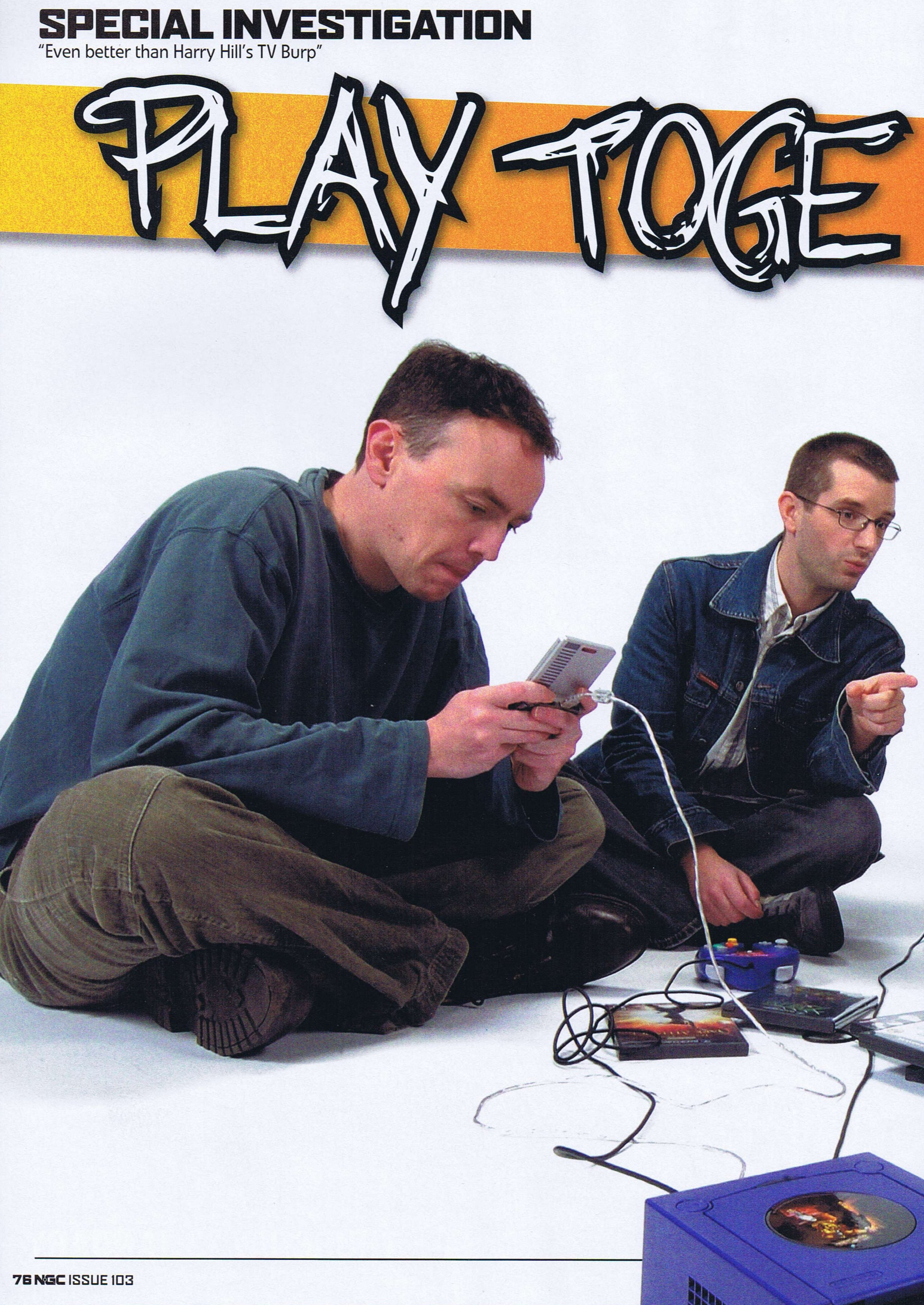
VERDICT

The minigames play like something that should have been included as a bonus mode in a much bigger game.




NGC 60

PLAY TOGE





New year, new beginnings. Time to stop shooting each other in the back and learn to play as a team. All together now...

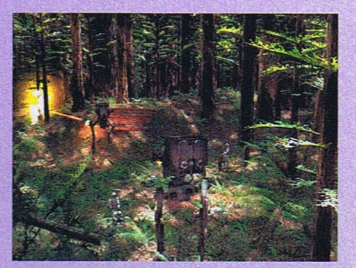
As should be obvious and apparent to anyone with half a brainstem and even the merest pipette full of common sense, multiplayer gaming is one of the very best things ever to be put on God's Green Earth. Yes, we reckon it's even better than Harry Hill's TV Burp or that bit in Buffy where Willow's evil goth twin turns out to be a bit, y'know, *sapphic*. Incredible, but true.

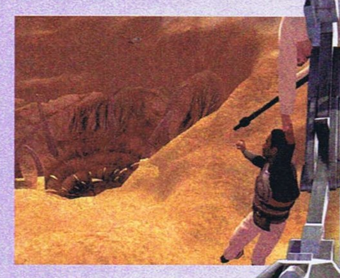
But there's one side of multiplayer gaming that's been given short shrift. It's all very well hurling red shells at each other in *Mario Kart* or stabbing each other in the eyes in *Soul Calibur* – two very worthy and noble pastimes – but what about co-operative gaming? Y'know, playing together, helping each out and all that? There's huge scope for it in games and it's not something we see enough of. And so we've decided to take a look at eight of the best co-operative games around and tell you all about them; an idea that's coincided with the entire **NGC** team being beset with colds, influenza and all manner of wintry ailments. Curled up on the **NGC** sofa, we felt so rotten we couldn't possibly entertain thoughts of shooting each other to bits, so we filled the flask with Ovaltine, emptied Geraint of as much snot as we could (roughly two litres) and settled in for an evening of friend-accompanying fun...

ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE

Take down the evil empire with the help of a friend.







WHAT IS IT?

The entirety of *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*, included as a two-player co-operative mode. An astonishing extra and arguably better than *Rogue Squadron III*, the game you're actually buying.

WHAT WE THINK:

Geraint: (Sneezing loudly and letting the mucus dribble over his top lip) I really can't believe it. It's literally *all* of *Rogue Leader* – even the bonus missions have been thrown in – and it's super-smooth and, as an actual game, hangs together far better than *Rogue Squadron III*.

Marcus: Yeah, it's amazing. Even the rubbish missions – like that bombing run in the Y-Wings – come alive with a real live wingman to help you out. The raid on the Imperial Academy is even enjoyable now – when you nick the shuttle at the end, one of you is flying it, the other's firing the gun. It's brilliantly done.

Mim: Yes, it's the way the objectives have been updated to accommodate two players that's a nice touch. Even if it means those towers on the first level on the Death Star are now twice as hard to destroy.

Martin (applying Vaseline to his chapped and tissue-ravaged nose): While I respect what Factor 5 have done here, they haven't solved the problem that in many cases you're fighting tiny grey spaceships on a grey background, made even more confusing by the split-screen set-up. My eyes have got better things to do than get strained like this.

Paul: Just sit closer to the telly, Kittsy. Job done! Now *that's* Sense Talk.

VERDICT 17

Brilliant fun that's been superbly considered for co-op play.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 5/5
The simple flight mechanics make this easy for novices to slip into.

TOGETHERNESS 5/5
Tweaked objectives mean you actually have to work together.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
You're both flying around in spaceships. In *Star Wars* spaceships at that. Brilliant.

LASTINGNESS 3/5
Obviously less if you've played the game before, but it's harder now and the bonus missions are still there to be unlocked.

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

The world's most expensive co-operative game.



WHAT IS IT?

An exclusive Final Fantasy game for Gamecube, but it's not *really* Final Fantasy. And you'll need four GBAs to play it properly. Erk!

WHAT WE THINK:

Martin: In theory, it's a brilliant, magnificent idea. But in reality, who's got three friends who all have GBAs, link cables, and the time to devote to an RPG? Hang on, I think my cold is moving downwards (runs to toilet clutching bum).

Mim: Charming. But anyway, yes, it requires an absurd amount of cash and organisation to play properly, but having done so in the office, it's terrific, isn't it?

Geraint: Yeah, it really is. The way everyone falls into a role, y'know, the fighter, the wizard, and so on – you've all got a specific part to play and it's the true essence of co-operative gaming.

Marcus: And it's not – thankfully – a 'proper' FF game. It's much simpler than that, which makes it wonderfully accessible. And it looks *amazing*. Still one of the best Gamecube games, visually speaking, ever. *Ever*.

Paul: Admittedly, my understanding of these things is small due to my shrunken brain, but the use of the GBA is really good, isn't it? RPGs are usually ruined by menu-management, which take you away from the action, but all you have to do here for your stat-twiddling and equipment-fiddling (not that there's much of it) is look at your GBA. The action isn't interrupted at all. (Martin enters the room, a foul stench following him from the loo).

Mim: I'm going to be sick.

VERDICT 15

Expensive but, if you've got the friends and the GBAs, brilliant fun.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 2/5
A simple game to play, but the expense and equipment needed are huge barriers.

TOGETHERNESS 5/5
Proper co-operative RPG wonderment. For *four* players!

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
Really comes to life with four players, and is better than playing some spong a million miles away over the internet.

LASTINGNESS 5/5
It'll probably last because you'll never get three mates together often enough to finish it. But it's a sizable game.



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EPISODES I & II

Proper bleep-blork roleplaying over the internet.





WHAT IS IT?

The Dreamcast classic – and its sequel – in one stat-heavy package

WHAT WE THINK:

Martin: I can't stand this kind of thing. All the stats, the ridiculous items, the stupid repetitive monster-slaying, not to mention the sheer frustration of trying to get my Gamecube online. And who wants to play games with some geek on the other side of the world, anyway?

Geraint (slathering snot all over his face): Mmm. If you don't give it a chance you'll never understand it, Kittsy. It's great fun when you take time to get used to the stats. You can form real friendships online and the fact that you have to type to communicate means you don't get stupid Americans swearing at you all the time.



Marcus: But it *is* a hassle to get online – even just tracking down a broadband adaptor is a pain – and the typing, unless you've got one of those expensive import-only keyboard controllers, is laborious and tiresome as you've got to use the on-screen keyboard to do it.

Geraint: Yes, all true. But like *Crystal Chronicles*, if you spend the money and make the effort, you'll find a game that'll suck your life away. Plus! You can play it offline in split-screen, too, although it's not ideal.

Mim: What I like about it is that, although there's an awful lot of stuff in the game, at heart it's quite a basic RPG and therefore accessible to me and others who might not otherwise like it. Like Kittsy. Right, who's for some nourishing bat-wing soup?

(Entire team turns green, Kittsy runs to toilet again).

VERDICT



Gamecube's only online game is a triumph – if you can get it online.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 1/5
Easy to play, but getting a modem or broadband adaptor and then actually getting online isn't simple. Plus! It costs £5.99 a month on top of that. Expensive.

TOGETHERNESS 4/5
Beautifully co-operative, like *FF:CC*, but online. Unless you're playing split-screen.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
There are always people online ready for an adventure. Simple combat, but a great experience.

LASTINGNESS 5/5
Immense. Beyond the main levels, such as they are, there's a wealth of quests and a list of items so big you'll never see 'em all.

ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES

Link goes multiplayer for the second time in his life.



WHAT IS IT?

A Gamecube spin-off of the multiplayer segment of the GBA *A Link To The Past* conversion. Like a few of the other games we're looking at, you'll need GBAs to play it.

WHAT WE THINK:

Marcus: I can't tell if I'm delirious from seven Lemsips* or from *Four Swords'* utter brilliantness. I love it almost too much. (Sneezes, burps, giggles, slumps into unconsciousness).

Mim: Like *Crystal Chronicles*, this is an exercise in 'connectivity', but somehow this seems to be more successful. It's almost like I *want* to buy a GBA to be able to play it.

Martin: Perhaps that's because this is Zelda, and you always know Zelda's puzzles are a cut above everything else. And the simple fact is that this takes advantage of connectivity in a far more innovative manner than *Crystal Chronicles*.

Geraint: I agree. Although things like the action moving to your GBA screen seem a little gimmicky at first, later puzzles – like the bit where one of you can see and has to direct the others' arrow firing – really come into their own. But GBAs aside, this is also a cut above in terms of co-operative action and sheer fun.

Paul: I agree. I'll never tire of picking Kittsy up and throwing him around. And the sheer amount of brilliant *moments* – like setting fire to the grass or using the lanterns to see in the gloom – make this a joy, even despite the crappy-in-places GBA-style graphics. Honestly, I could've drawn better on a napkin.

Martin: Go on then.

Paul. Can't. It's got snot all over it.

(Silence)

VERDICT



Buy a GBA and three friends just to play it. It's that much fun.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 4/5
Simple but deep, but the problem of GBA-owning comes up again.

TOGETHERNESS 5/5
As much fun, in its own co-operative way, as *Mario Kart*: DD is as a multiplayer party game.

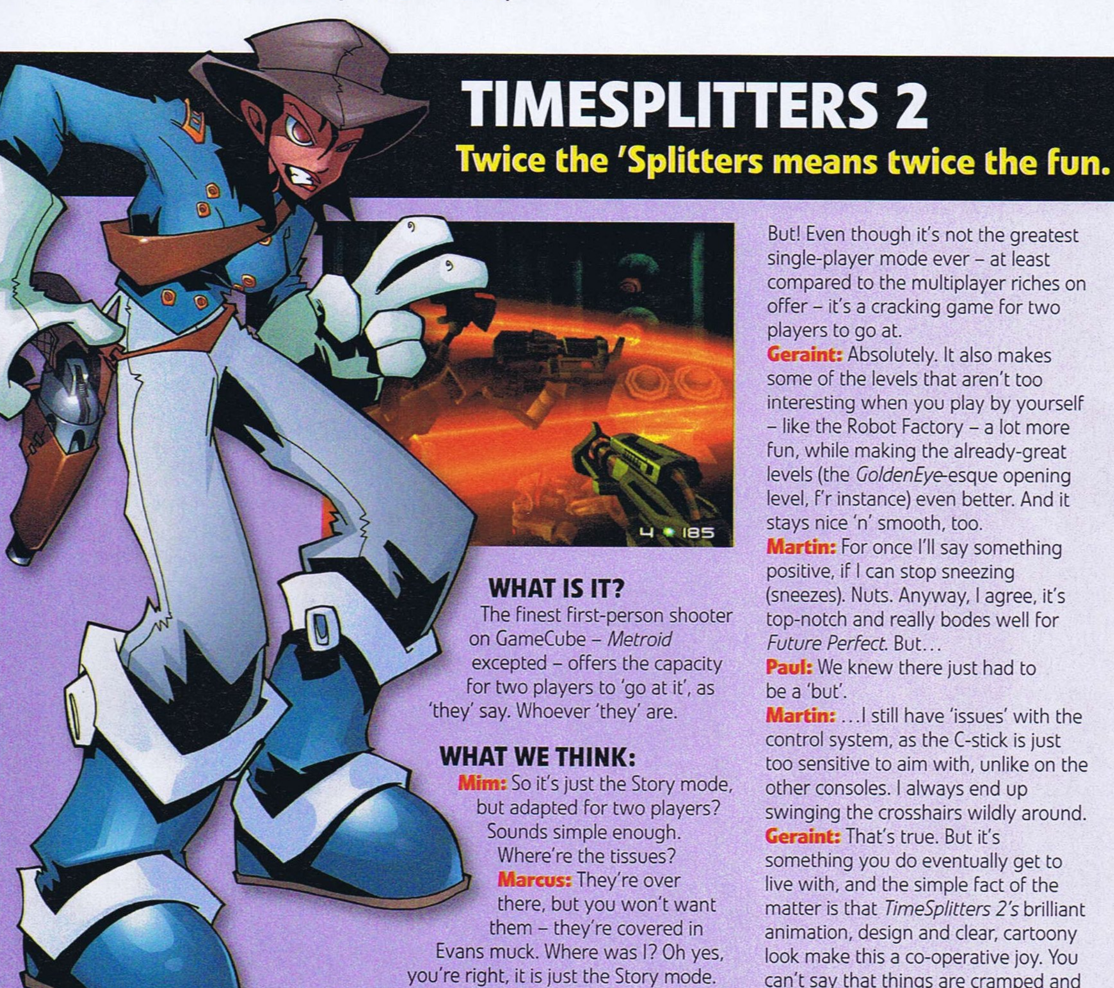
FUNNINGNESS 5/5
Brilliantly conceived and laugh-out-loud, play-all-day fun. You'll never want to go home.

LASTINGNESS 5/5
It's a Zelda game, so you'll want to see absolutely everything it has to offer. And it's not small either.

*We didn't really let Marcus drink seven Lemsips. Any medicine containing paracetamol can cause fatal liver damage if taken in excess. NEVER take more than one medicine containing paracetamol, and NEVER take extra medicine, no matter how poorly you feel. Got it?

TIMESPLITTERS 2

Twice the 'Splitters means twice the fun.



WHAT IS IT?

The finest first-person shooter on GameCube – *Metroid* excepted – offers the capacity for two players to 'go at it', as 'they' say. Whoever 'they' are.

WHAT WE THINK:

Mim: So it's just the Story mode, but adapted for two players? Sounds simple enough. Where're the tissues?
Marcus: They're over there, but you won't want them – they're covered in Evans muck. Where was I? Oh yes, you're right, it is just the Story mode. But! Even though it's not the greatest single-player mode ever – at least compared to the multiplayer riches on offer – it's a cracking game for two players to go at.
Geraint: Absolutely. It also makes some of the levels that aren't too interesting when you play by yourself – like the Robot Factory – a lot more fun, while making the already-great levels (the *GoldenEye*-esque opening level, f'r instance) even better. And it stays nice 'n' smooth, too.
Martin: For once I'll say something positive, if I can stop sneezing (sneezes). Nuts. Anyway, I agree, it's top-notch and really bodes well for *Future Perfect*. But…
Paul: We knew there just had to be a 'but'.
Martin: …I still have 'issues' with the control system, as the C-stick is just too sensitive to aim with, unlike on the other consoles. I always end up swinging the crosshairs wildly around.
Geraint: That's true. But it's something you do eventually get to live with, and the simple fact of the matter is that *TimeSplitters 2's* brilliant animation, design and clear, cartoony look make this a co-operative joy. You can't say that things are cramped and confusing here, as you did with *Rogue Leader*.
Martin: Very true, Evans, very true. But this shining moment of Kitts-positivity won't last, you know.
All: We know.

VERDICT 17

Super-slinky first-person thrills. Only spoilt by the controls.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 3/5
The fiddly control system and sometimes less-than-clear-cut objectives don't do the ol' 'Splitters any favours.

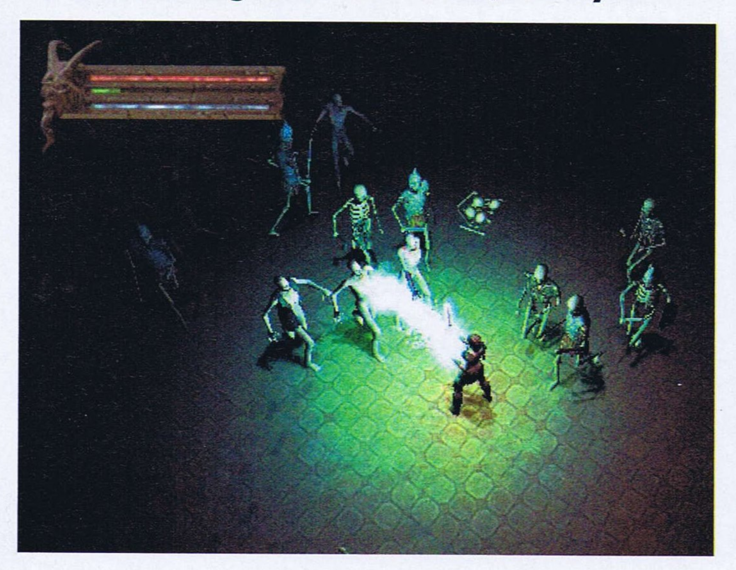
TOGETHERNESS 5/5
Aces. You're always watching each other's backs, concentrating fire to take down enemies and helping each other out.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
The controls might be an eternal issue, and some of the levels are less than great, but it's a top shooty romp.

LASTINGNESS 3/5
Some of the levels are, to put it mildly, bastard hard. But it's not as big a game as the *GoldenEyes* and *Perfect Darks* of yore.

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

Kobolds and goblins and orcs, oh my!



WHAT IS IT?

A dumbed-down version of the PC classic with added two-player support. Fantasy-fresh!

WHAT WE THINK:

Martin: I…
Marcus: …hate goblins and orcs. Yes, we know.
Mim: Nothing wrong with a nice bit of goblin. But this isn't what you'd call *proper* roleplaying, is it?
Geraint: No, not in terms of something like *Phantasy Star Online*, it's not. Or even compared to the original *Baldur's Gate* games on the PC; this keeps the stat-building and so on, but streamlines it all rather well for a more 'console-like' experience, whatever that means.
Paul: I have no idea what that means, but from here it looks like you're wandering around hitting things until they fall over.
Marcus: Yes, that's exactly it. But that's really all you do in *Crystal Chronicles* and *PSO*, to be honest, and this is a more traditional version of fantasy than either of those games. It is, quite literally, a console version of Dungeons and Dragons. But, for some reason, it's still horribly addictive, though…
Geraint: Yeah, it is, and once again you'll find yourself playing to your character, so while one person might be up front kicking the stuffing out of things as a dwarf, the other can hang back and heal him as a wizard or lend long-range support as an archer, and so on. It's nothing revolutionary, it's just done very well.
Martin: I will grant you that it looks lovely, but the frame-rate hiccups a bit now and then.
Mim: A poor conversion, I suppose, as that's not apparent in the PS2 and Xbox versions. Er, I hear. Where's the Ovaltine?

VERDICT 16

Old-school dungeon bashing just like mother used to make..

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 5/5
Simple. Hit things, get experience, make yourself stronger. Basic but, y'know, deep.

TOGETHERNESS 4/5
Only two players can play but you'll be working together like dwarf and elf. Or something.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
It's repetitive but somehow despite that it's jolly addictive, even when you're just clearing basements of rats. Odd.

LASTINGNESS 4/5
You may well get bored before the end but there's so much to see and do that it's worth sticking with.



SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

The game with the most misleading name in history.





WHAT IS IT?

More first-person shootery but minus any trace of subtlety. Plus! Varied settings and hordes of silly monsters to shoot. It's like *Doom* – but not.

WHAT WE THINK:

Geraint: Great, great, great. In some ways this is even better than *TimeSplitters 2* as a co-operative game.
Mim: Why's that?
Geraint: Because *Serious Sam* is a calculated attempt at simple fun and silliness – it's like *Doom* in that all you do is shoot hordes and hordes of enemies. All. The. Time. And while that can get tiring on your own, with a mate it's simply stupid, over-the-top brilliance.
Martin: It looks like a dog's arse, though. It's not exactly cutting-edge in the graphics department, is it? In fact, it's about as cutting-edge as 'tard scissors.
Marcus: But that doesn't matter. Everything's clear and colourful so you can see everything, and the relatively primitive nature of the graphics means that the game can afford to hurl hundreds of monsters around without suffering any annoying frame-rate drops.
Paul: It's daft, but I love it. The weapons are ace, too, as are the power-ups. I like the skates.
Geraint: You know, the more I play this, the more I *do* prefer it as a co-op game to *TimeSplitters*. There's nothing quite like blowing the baloney out of literally hundreds of those flying green things. It's just cartoon mayhem for mayhem's sake. I love it.
Martin: But it *is* repetitive, isn't it?
Geraint: Yes. But it's such a laugh that it's made me forget all about my cold and the fact that my Wavebird is covered in snot.
Martin: Get away from me you disgusting freak.

VERDICT 14

Silly and throwaway, but an inordinate amount of gun-fun.

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 1/5
None of the intricacies or subtleties of *TimeSplitters* – you just stand and shoot!

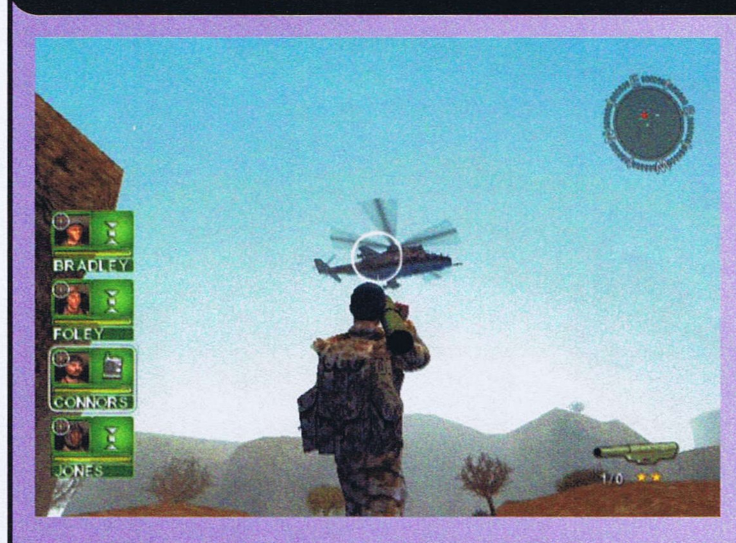
TOGETHERNESS 4/5
You'll be whooping out loud as you batter hordes of dayglo monsters.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
Hilarious over-the-top carnage. You're never more than seconds away from shooting something.

LASTINGNESS 5/5
It's a big game and, frankly, only the repetitive nature of the shooting will stop you from seeing things through to the end.

CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2

A very brown game with soldiers in it.



WHAT IS IT?

Distressingly reality-based tactical shooter set in the brown, brown beauty of Iraq. Get past the too-close-for-comfort subject matter, though, and it's ace.

WHAT WE THINK:

Marcus: Brown, isn't it?
Martin: Very. But the four-player support is superb – playing it on your own can sometimes get to be a bit of a chore, as you've got three squad members to order about, and you can't let any of them die. With mates, though, this isn't an issue.
Mim: The way each character has a specific role – like the sniper – means that each player knows what they should be doing. Clever, that,
Geraint: You need to play it on a really big TV, though; I'd forgotten just how cramped four-player split-screen games can be.
Paul: It never bothered us with *Mario Kart* and the like, though...
Geraint: True. But a game like this has a lot more on-screen action and 'furniture' to confuse things.
Marcus: It's really exciting. It might be a bit, shall we say, inappropriate, given the subject matter, but creeping through the streets of Baghdad or wherever is superbly atmospheric, even if some of the graphics can be a bit Dumpsville, USA.
Martin: Yeah. The missions are mostly great, too; they give you your objectives but let you, as a team, work out how to achieve them. Along with its predecessor, this is a bit of an underrated classic, I reckon. It's almost the opposite of *Serious Sam* – considered and tactical.
Paul: But they both have a lot to offer – they're just different experiences. Lemsip, anyone?
All: Yes please.

VERDICT



Morally dubious, perhaps, but a four-friend feast of fun. Great!

ACCESSIBILITYNESS 3/5
A simple blaster at heart, but one that requires tactics and strategy.

TOGETHERNESS 5/5
Four players working together in beautiful harmony.

FUNNINGNESS 4/5
It can get a little laborious as you retry tricky objectives but you'll end up with a font of war stories.

LASTINGNESS 5/5
There are only 12 missions but there's a wealth of objectives within each of 'em.

EXTENDED PLAY

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Last issue we showed you where to find all the missiles in the game. This month we're hoovering up energy tanks, beam expansions and power bombs, plus you can have a go at some special techniques and sequence breaking. It's all here, ready for you to try.

Mopping up the extras in Samus' Light and Dark travels.

This issue we're going to help you find essential items. What's more, we've got a section on sequence breaking. What's that? It's when you're able to reach a part of the game in a way the designers didn't intend you to, like when you access an area that's supposed to be out of your reach. You'll find places to sequence break in most Metroid games, and mad-keen fans of the series go out of their way to find them. With these tips you don't have to go to the trouble of locating places to sequence break – but it'll still take some mad skillz to actually do it...



WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 101!

As the game progresses you get a gradual feeling of empowerment as you become more familiar with your weapons, skills and the growing environment – and your pride swells as you overcome the game's tougher mental challenges.

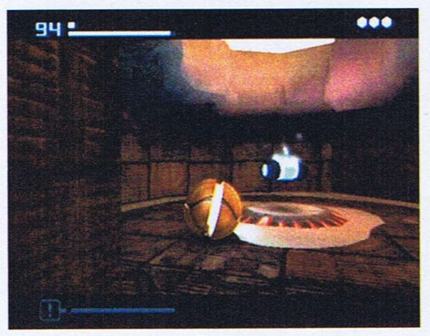
NGC 94

ENERGY TANKS

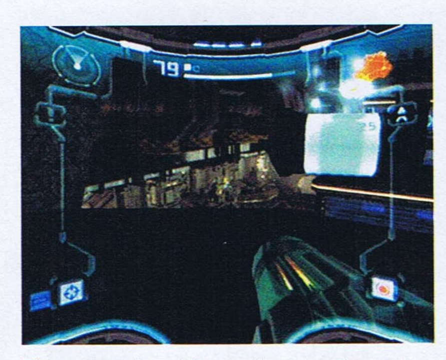
Power to the people! Or the hard suit, anyway…



1 Location: Temple Grounds, Storage Cavern B
You need: Missiles
To get it: Shoot the red missile door and head inside to collect your first energy tank.



2 Location: Agon Wastes, Mining Station Access
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: Blow up the block in the middle of the sphere and drop down the middle. Once you've been launched up, roll forwards to collect the next energy tank.



3 Location: Agon Wastes, Bioenergy Production
You need: Space jump
To get it: Activate the blocks and lower the right block three times, the middle block twice and a left-hand block once. Space jump up these makeshift steps to the energy tank.



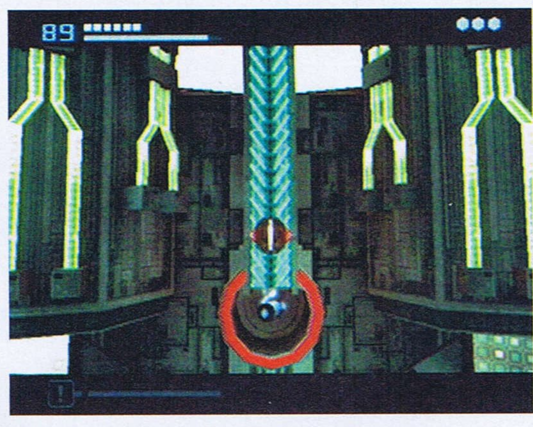
4 Location: Agon Wastes, Mine Shaft
You need: Morph ball bombs, double bomb jumps
To get it: From the Temple entrance, go left until you see the first block. Stun the creature and then, on the right side, perform a double bomb jump up and left. Bomb jump up once to the left and go left fast, skipping past the disappearing blocks. Stop just after the second set of four blocks and in the middle of this section do a single bomb jump left. Bomb jump left again and fall to the energy tank.



5 Location: Torvus Bogs, Temple Access
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: Get onto the upper level of the room and simply morph and bomb the very first round part of the bridge. Drop in the hole to collect the energy tank.



6 Location: Dark Torvus Bogs, Cache B
You need: Super missiles
To get it: Open the super missile door underneath the temple.



7 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Reactor Core
You need: Spider ball
To get it: From the bottom, use the cannon to boost onto the globe. Latch onto it with the spider ball. Move to the top and once the electricity has stopped go up. Go on the red section and boost to the next orb. Wait for the electricity to finish on the next orb, then boost. Find the next red section and boost. Repeat twice more, then boost onto the spider ball track. Boost over to the next piece of track and follow it down to the energy tank.

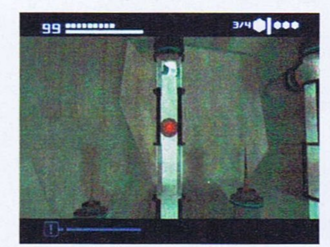




8 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Watch Station Access
You need: Light beam
To get it: Enter the door from Watch Station and it's just on your left.



9 Location: Temple Grounds, Windchamber Gateway
You need: Grapple beam
To get it: Use the cannon to boost over to the other side of the room. Use the grapple beam to swing across to the energy tank.



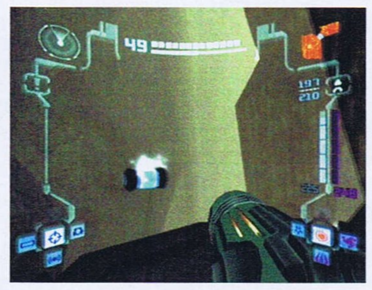
10 Location: Torvus Bogs, Transit Tunnel East
You need: Underwater double bomb jumps
To get it: From the right-hand side, double bomb jump into the bomb slot. Go right past the next two slots and perform an underwater double bomb jump (drop the last bomb when you've almost reached the top of the first bomb jump). Bomb the slot and, with the timer going, go left two and perform another double underwater bomb jump into the energy tank.



11 Location: Torvus Bogs, Torvus Plaza
You need: Spider ball
To get it: Kill the Commandos and then go to the back of the half pipe. Boost a few times and latch onto the spider ball track. Work your way around, remembering to be careful of the sporb. It's also very easy to fall off. Once you reach the top, use the morph ball cannon to blast you over to the energy tank.



12 Location: Agon Wastes, Mining Plaza
You need: Echo visor, screw attack
To get it: Use the Echo visor to pinpoint the three sonic devices in the room. Shoot them one by one. This will open up the section in the cliff that holds the energy tank. Screw attack over to the tank.



13 Location: Torvus Bogs, Meditation Vista
You need: Screw attack
To get it: Go to the left of the portal and look a bit to your right. You'll spot a platform that goes in and out. You need to time a screw attack jump precisely so you land on the platform and be taken into the energy tank.



14 Location: Temple Grounds, Fortress Transport Access
You need: Light suit
To get it: When you're in this room, jump into the yellow beam of light (you can't miss it – just check out the picture above to see how obvious it is). The light will transport you to the room holding the final energy tank.

BEAM EXPANSIONS

Only four – but worth collecting.



1 Location: Agon Wastes, Central Mining Station
You need: Dark beam, Light beam
To get it: Head to the upper level of Central Mining Station. Go into the left turret. Shoot the pirate skiff to your bottom left and then shoot to the left of the force field in the distance. Finally, shoot the tanker further right. Make your way over using the pirate skiff below as a platform and go into the tunnel beside the force field.



3 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Watch Station
You need: Spider ball
To get it: Start the spider ball assault course over at the spider track near the far side of the room (adjacent to the floating platform). Get into the turret, and work your way carefully through the spider track course.

When you come to the big patch, take the lower left path and work your way to the beam ammunition expansion.



2 Location: Dark Torvus Bog, Cache A
You need: Seeker missile
To get it: In Poisoned Bog, use the Seeker Missile on the door at the back of the room to open up the room with the beam expansion inside.



4 Location: Sky Temple Grounds, Profane Path
You need: Annihilator beam
To get it: Switch on the Echo visor and use the Annihilator beam to open the sonic locks on the door. Collect the final beam ammo expansion.

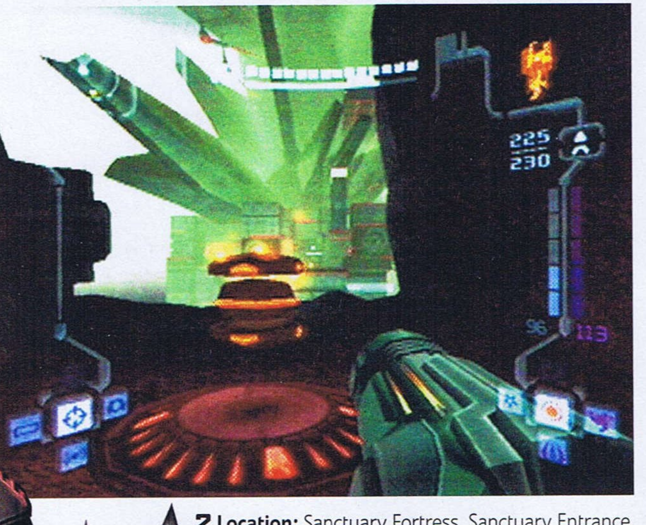
POWER BOMB EXPANSIONS

More bang for your buck.

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1 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Transit Station
You need: Power bombs, spider ball
To get it: Break the glass covering the Dark portal with a power bomb. Activate the portal, kill the Dark Ingsmasher, activate the Light portal and go through the next three portals. Use the spider ball at the top to reach the expansion in the enclosed room.



2 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Sanctuary Entrance
You need: Spider ball, Power bombs
To get it: Use a power bomb on the lift facing and scan the switch at the top of the lift. Go to the morph ball cannon opposite and proceed to the turret. Destroy the rocks down and to the left of your position, then take out the rock piles opposite each other in the upper centre of each side. Go to where the rock pile was near the ground, spider ball over to the upper ledge and use the turret to reach the power bomb expansion.



3 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Main Gyro Chamber
You need: Annihilator beam, Echo visor
To get it: Take the left lift to the bottom level. Turn your Echo visor on and switch to your Annihilator beam, then shoot the keys in the following order: first the key in centre of room, then the key by the lift and finally shoot the middle key twice.

Get in the new morph ball cannon and you open up the next power bomb expansion.



4 Location: Temple Grounds, Dynamo Chamber
You need: Power bombs
To get it: Power bomb one of the metal security gates and look around for the scannable Denzium rubble. Power bomb this patch to reveal the expansion.



5 Location: Agon Wastes, Sandcanyon
You need: Screw attack, Power bombs
To get it: Screw attack over to the platform in the middle. Power bomb the Denzium there and collect the power bomb expansion.



6 Location: Dark Agon Wastes, Feeding Pit
You need: Light suit, Dark visor
To get it: Drop into the Dark water and switch on the Dark visor. Go in between the two pillars and look left. You should notice an opening and a power bomb expansion.



7 Location: Dark Torvus Bog, Putrid Alcove
You need: Power bombs
To get it: Look for the Denzium to the side of the Phlogus. Jump into the acid and blow a hole in the wall with a power bomb to expose the power bomb expansion.



8 Location: Torvus Bog, Great Bridge
You need: Power bombs
To get it: After boosting onto the top of the bridge, at the back is some more scannable Denzium rubble. Power bomb this to reveal a morph ball tunnel that leads to the final power bomb expansion.

SEQUENCE BREAKS AND SPEED TRICKS

Play it your way – take *that*, Mr Developer!



CHYKKA BEFORE GRAPPLE BEAM

Getting to Chykka before acquiring the beam is quite a simple trick to achieve, while at the same time it makes the fight with Chykka much more interesting. When you reach Venomous Pond, go to the door at the opposite end of the room. Turn around and you'll spot the Dark Temple Key on the ledge. Just in front of you should be a few of the jelly-like Ing pods, which you need to jump onto the top of. From here, perform an L-Lock space jump to the ledge, delaying the second jump slightly.



HALL OF COMBAT MASTERY MISSILES WITHOUT SPIDER BALL

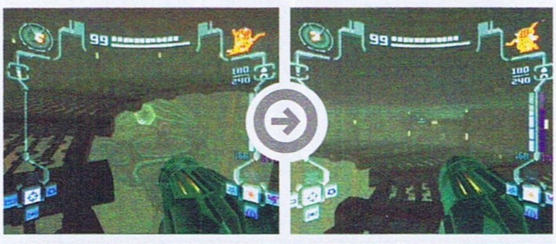
To collect the missile without bothering with the laborious spider ball morph ball puzzle, go to the two pillars that have two panels running up the sides (opposite the missile itself). Facing the missile, jump on top of the left panel and look towards the entrance where the spider ball track stops. If you perform a low space jump and morph at the lip of the entrance by the spider ball track (at roughly a 45° angle), it's possible to use the height gained by the instant mid-air morph to pop you into the space! Collect the missile expansion as normal.

EASY KILL JUMP GUARDIAN

It's possible to start the Jump Guardian fight so it requires only a single power beam shot to kill it! Even if you don't try any of the other sequence breaks here, you must admit that this one's really tempting. When you reach Portal Site, instead of bombing the slot to the left, activate the Light beacon to the right. Roll up against the high wall and perform a double bomb jump morph (see Advanced Techniques on p.88 for how to do this) to the top. Proceed to the next ledge in Portal Access. Jump on top of the tallest Bladepod and then jump to the ledge, walk to the very edge of it and jump to the upper platform.

In Judgement Pit take a left and on the next platform activate the beacon, turn around and perform another double bomb jump morph to the platform above (but press up when you hit the last bomb to get some forward momentum). Now unmorph at the top and move to the beacon before the sand. Look towards the bottom left of the statue and shoot off 27 charged power beam shots (remembering to recharge the beacon every so often). You're actually hitting the Jump Guardian, who is invisible for now. Now jump into the Light beacon below in the middle of the room to trigger the boss fight. One shot from your beam will finish off the boss!

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GRAPPLE BEAM BEFORE BOOST BALL, GRAVITY BOOST OR SEEKER MISSILES

In Hydrodynamo Station, position yourself in the water at the top and stand so the Light door is below and to Samus' direct left. Now perform an underwater dash to the Light door. Proceed to Gathering Hall and activate the bomb slot to raise the gate. Enter the portal and, in the crypt, jump to the platform that has the laser statue. Turn right and space jump onto the top of the platform with the wires suspended, then turn around and do a long space jump onto the top of the laser. Now simply space jump up to the Light door at the top and proceed to the grapple beam as normal.

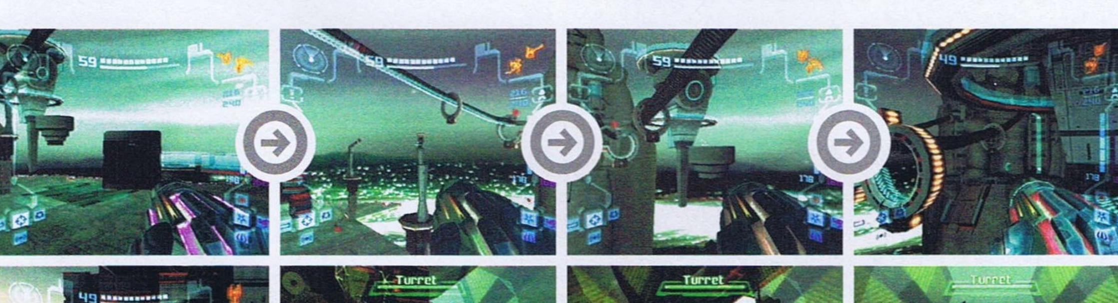


SCREW ATTACK BEFORE SPIDER BALL AND ECHO VISOR

In Watch Station Access, you must perform the tough 'Kip dash' (see p.88 for details) from the edge using the Light door as this is designed to fool the Terminal Fall into placing you at the opposite end of the room. Please be aware, however, that this trick is very tough to do, but it's most certainly possible.

Once you've done that, proceed to Watch Station and get ready for some crafty jumps. Kill one Rezbit and then go to the Rezbit nearer the spider ball track. Wait for it to put up its shield and then space jump on top of this. Jump on top of the spider track on the wall and then turn around to face a higher-up spider track. Space jump onto this and then face the front of the room so your back is to the portal. Space jump backwards and, as you hit the wall on the last jump, mid-air morph to land in the bomb slot to open up the portal gate. Proceed as normal to the screw attack.











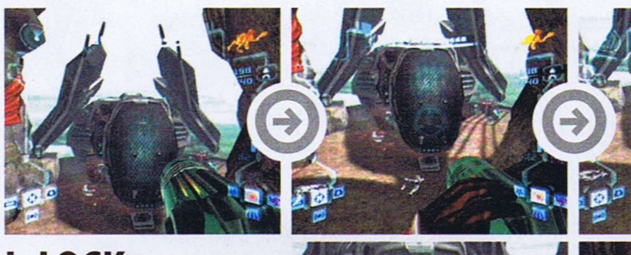
POWER BOMB EXPANSION BEFORE MAIN POWER BOMBS

Once you have the screw attack, go to Sanctuary Entrance. When you reach the bridge, Dark Samus destroys it. Look to your right and jump on the large crate, then turn left and jump onto the top of the pole closest to you. Look right and screw attack to the lowest platform that has the spider ball tracks leading to the large turret above. Stand up and then face the round spider ball track in the distance that you'd normally boost from. Perform a ghetto jump up to land on the round platform above you. Turn 180°, and screw attack over to the elevator with a Denzium shield. You will land over the top, allowing you to scan the lift. Scan it, then jump on top of the scan point and space jump over the top to the ground. Roll into the morph ball cannon and go to the turret. Shoot the three parts to allow you to reach the top section. Simply use the morph ball cannon to reach the power bomb expansion. You now have one power bomb to use whenever you wish!



ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Special jumps and manoeuvres to liven things up.



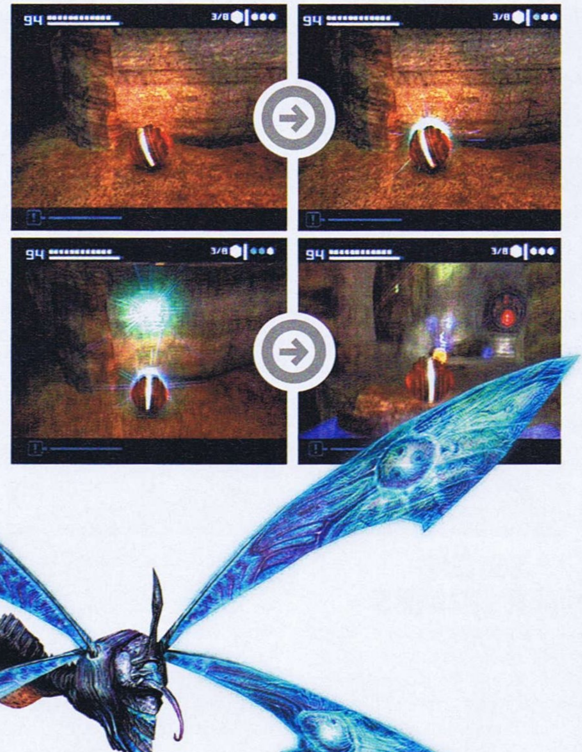
L-LOCK SPACE JUMP

This increases the distance and height when space jumping. Tilt your view down and hold L. Run off a ledge and release L as you press jump or just before you press it a second time. Releasing L gives the jump extra spring.



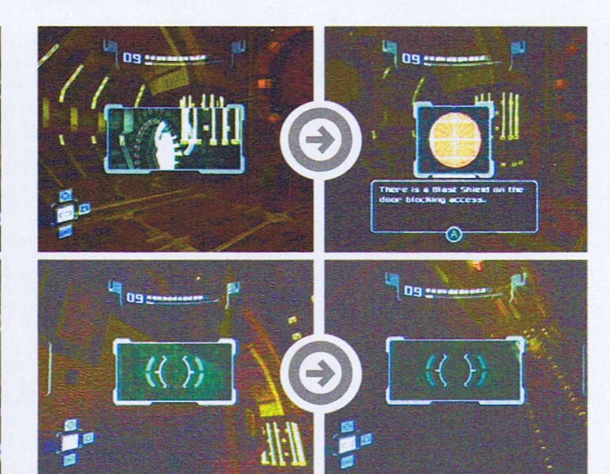
GHETTO JUMP

This type of jump allows Samus to reach platforms that are too high for a normal space jump. If you press yourself up against a slanted wall and then jump, pull back on the controller midway up and press jump and forwards again at the peak of the first jump, you will find yourself going higher than normal as the slant itself boosts you upwards. Bear in mind, though, that this won't work on all walls as the game is covered in invisible barriers, so experiment on a variety of walls.



DOUBLE BOMB JUMP MORPHS

To perform a double bomb jump, lay a bomb, then just before it goes off, lay a second one. You'll be blasted into the air, so at the peak, lay the third bomb. As you descend, you'll land on the explosion of the second bomb and you'll be propelled into the explosion of the third bomb sending you up higher. If you now unmorph and hold forwards at the peak of this jump you'll gain extra height.



KIP DASH

Named after the guy who discovered it, this trick is used to cover large distances quickly. However, it's not easy to do, so it will require practice to become proficient at it. First, fully scan an object and now do the following steps very quickly to pull this neat manoeuvre off. Hold L and tap B while pushing the control stick left very quickly. As soon as the control stick hits left, immediately rotate the control stick anti-clockwise to down in one smooth motion. The screen will freeze as the scan text appears, so now hold R and move the stick slightly down-right. Now release L and lightly press L again straight after releasing it. About one second after this, tap the B button again to initiate the second jump. When done correctly you will rapidly clear a lot of ground behind you.



UNDERWATER DASH

A variation of the scan dash, this trick is performed underwater to launch Samus great distances sideways. This trick is also possible on land; however the distance gained isn't anywhere near as large as it is underwater. Assuming you wish to travel left, hold L and begin strafing left. Now press R and B all the way down and Samus will start to turn left. About 30° into this turn, keep L and R pressed, but release the control stick and B. You'll shoot left, so leave your fingers on L and R still and for your second jump tap B only. This will preserve your momentum.

MID-AIR MORPH

By simply morphing at the top of a jump, you will gain an extra bit of height, which can be used to fit into suspended gaps.

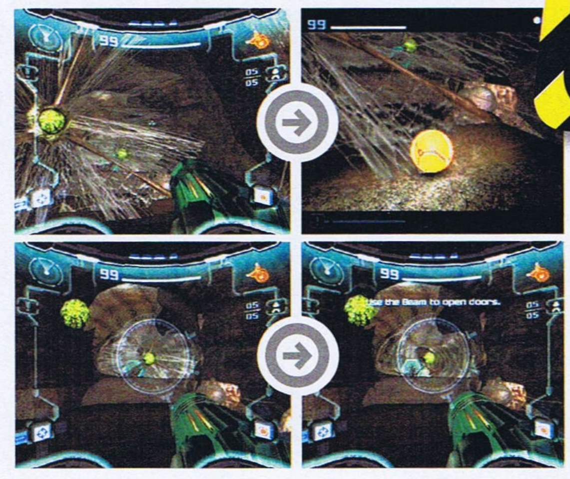


GLITCHES

Well, would you believe it?

WEBBING BOOST GLITCH

At the very beginning of the game, destroy the first webbing, but for the second webbing, morph and boost into the bottom-right corner of the web. You will eventually boost through it, leaving the sac suspended in mid air! You can also do this to the remaining webbing before the door.



EXIT ROOM BOUNDARIES

To exit the boundaries of a room (known to Metroid fans as 'Secret Worlds'), use the screw attack to enter a morph ball tunnel that's higher than ground level. If you get in far enough, you will unmorph IN the tunnel and outside the room! If you haven't been in a Metroid Prime 'Secret World' before, they're not much use, but it's cool looking at the rooms from the wrong side. While you can walk around like this, morphing will cause you to drop forever until you unmorph.







PERMANENTLY VANISHING SONIC LOCKS

If you enter a room that has sonic locks on the door (such as Main Research) but don't remove all the sonic locks before leaving more than one room away, the locks will disappear for good, forcing you to restart from your last save file. If you save after doing this glitch, you'll have to restart from scratch.

'FLOATY' JUMP

Blow three locks off the Chykka Larva and then jump into the acid before destroying the fourth section. After the cut-scene ends, the game will give you the ability to perform massive jumps! You can jump quite far and high. However, stepping back into the acid, normal water or going on an elevator will revert your jumping abilities back to normal.

EXTRA CHALLENGES

Still not had enough? These challenges should test your ability thoroughly.

22% RUN

Finishing the game with the maximum number of items is all well and good, but for a real challenge, why not try to beat the game with the absolute minimum of items? That gives you 99 health and 10 missiles (missile launcher and Seeker missiles) and your normal weapons to finish the game with. Find that too easy? Do it on Hard mode, then (completely doable).

NGC TIP: To make the Boost Guardian easier on 99 health, jump on top of one of the four beacons in the arena to make the boss boost into them, revealing 99 health drops each time.

NO DARK SUIT RUN

It's entirely possible to skip the Dark suit completely and pick up the Light suit instead! Once you have the Light beam you can head to Torvus. The damage taken in Dark Aether without the Dark suit makes this one quite a challenge.

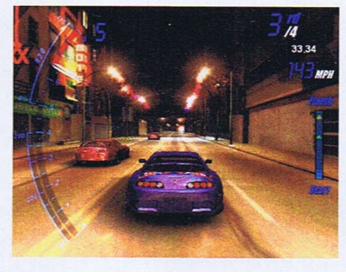
NGC TIP: In Abandoned Base, the only way to make it through here without the Dark suit and only four energy tanks is to ghetto jump just before the Light portal as you enter the room. If you ghetto from the right hand wall up, you can reach the Light portal, bypassing almost the entire room!

NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS
PROBLEMS SOLVED
EVERYTHING
YOU NEED!

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA







CALL OF DUTY FINEST HOUR

UNLOCKABLES

ALL CHEATS
Complete the game on the Hard difficulty to unlock all the cheats.

MAKING OF... MOVIE 1
Complete all the 'Russian' levels in the game to see this.

MAKING OF... MOVIE 2
Complete all the 'British' levels in the game to see this.

MAKING OF... MOVIE 3
Complete all the 'US' levels in the game to see this.



LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES

UNLOCK ARENAS
To unlock the final five Shadow Battle arenas to fight in, complete the Hyrulean Adventure.

TINGLE TOWER MINIGAMES
You want these? You sicko! Playing in multiplayer mode, complete the second stage of each level to unlock the corresponding minigame.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDER-GROUND 2

UNLOCKABLES
For these unique items and magazine covers, get the required number of wins in the outrun race stage specified.

STAGE 2
4: Hoods
4: Turbo magazine
8: Sports Compact Car magazine

STAGE 3
2: Street Car Magazine
3: Performance choice
6: Rims
6: Car Audio and Electronics
11: GTI magazine
18: Hot 4's magazine

STAGE 4
3: Elaborare magazine
4: Spoiler
6: Vinyl
7: Maxi Tuning magazine
9: Performance choice
11: Spoiler magazine
16: AutoMaxx magazine
20: Stuff magazine
27: Chrome und Flamen magazine

STAGE 5
4: Import Tuner magazine
6: Performance choice
9: Street Car magazine
11: Widebody kit
16: GTI magazine
25: Swiss Tuner magazine
28: Super Street magazine
32: Power magazine
34: Street Tuner magazine

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES

LOGBOOK SCANS
Scan the required percentage of logbooks to unlock the following items:

Promotional gallery	40%
Character gallery	60%
Creature gallery	80%
Boss gallery	100%

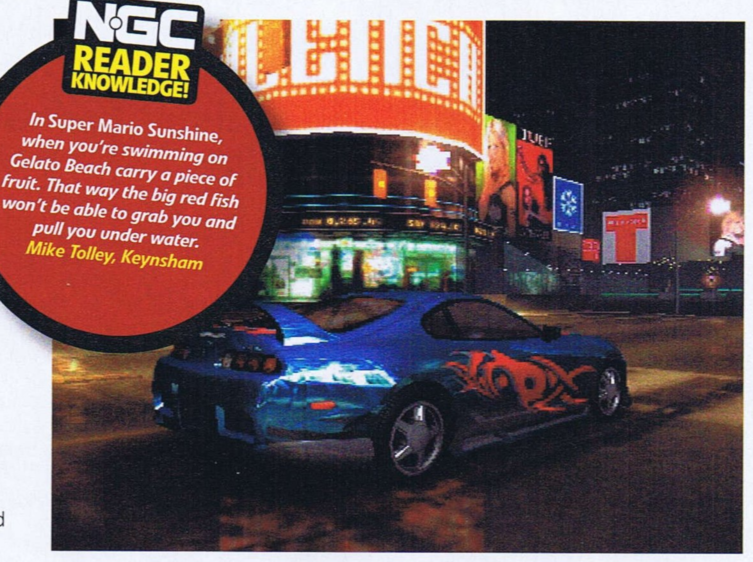
ITEMS OBTAINED
Collect the required percentage of items to unlock the following things:

Samus Body Suit movie	75%
Dark Samus ending	100%

DIFFICULTY SETTINGS
Complete the game to unlock Hard mode, and complete it on Normal to unlock the Rough Sketch gallery. Complete the game on Hard difficulty to unlock the Storyboard gallery.

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

In Super Mario Sunshine, when you're swimming on Gelato Beach carry a piece of fruit. That way the big red fish won't be able to grab you and pull you under water.
Mike Tolley, Keynsham





READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. RESIDENT EVIL 2

Even the odds

While you're playing the game, enter the Options menu. Select Button Config and highlight Aim. Now if you hold down the R button and press Z 10 times, you'll be rewarded with infinite ammunition for all your assorted zombie-slaying devices.
Tom Gibbons, Leicester

2. PAPER MARIO

Who wants to be a millionaire?

To win the lottery at Rogueport, change your Gamecube clock to the previous day after finding out the result of the draw. You'll then know the numbers to choose. Don't get too greedy – the second time you're fined 500 coins for cheating.
Claire Weston, Norwich

3. GOLDENEYE: RA

Die another day

Finish every level on Hard difficulty and you unlock the ridiculously hard One-life mode, where if you die you get sent back to the beginning again.
John Mulrooney, London

4. DONKEY KONGA

Monkeying around

If you blow into the microphone instead of making a proper clap roll, the game records a really high number of taps.
Sam Greene, Cheltenham

5. F-ZERO GX

Five alive

During Grand Prix mode, every five rival machines you destroy earns you another extra life.
Duncan McEwan, Stirling

6. GLADIUS

Slave labour

There's a huge glitch in this game – if you try to buy a Temporary Recruit in the League area when you don't have enough money, they'll be added to your party regardless. What's more, you can keep them!
Ollie Thompson, Newcastle

7. IKARUGA

Good things for those who wait

The game rewards you for the time you spend playing. For every hour you play, you'll earn extra continues, up to a maximum of nine of them in six hours. Once you've reached seven hours of playing time, you'll have earned unlimited continues.
'Ziggy', via email

8. MARIO GOLF

Extra contests

If you hold Z and press Start at the title screen, you get a new Special Contests section on the main menu. It's got new modes to try out, including a Hole-In-One contest.
Ed Owens, Swansea

9. SECOND SIGHT

Easter eggs

You can find arcade games in *Second Sight!* The first, *Earth Impact*, is on the Reliance level's main building, in an arcade machine (doh!). The second, *X-Space '92*, is on the Madness level. It's on a disk in the room with a guard after the third checkpoint, but you'll have to use telekinesis to reach it.
Michael Flinchey, Southend

10. ZELDA: WIND WAKER

Snap decision

When you're collecting figurines, return every day to Lenzo on Windfall Island. He'll sell you an assortment of Legendary Pictographs for only 50 Rupees each – bargain!
Andrew Wynne, Banbury





Dead or living? He prefers the former – they're quieter.

Dr Kitts,
This is going to sound seedy but… how do I get swimsuits for the girls in *Tales of Symphonia*?
Jeff Brown, via email

Best not dig too deep in Dr Kitts' vegetable patch…
You get to choose one person, but the other two – which I presume are what you're asking about – seem to be given to the two people Lloyd has highest affection for. If you're keen to see someone particular in a swimsuit but don't think they like you, best choose to give the outfit that one. Colette is usually the one Lloyd gets on best with, so don't bother selecting her as she'll probably get hers automatically.

Dr Kitts,
I'm having trouble beating Doopliss in *Paper Mario*. What do you recommend for beating the boss?
James O'Brien, Liverpool

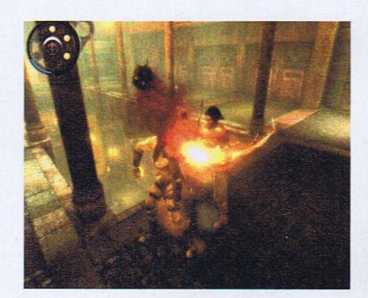
Dr Kitts has blocked drains…
Ah yes, the miscreant who's stolen Mario's identity. Part of the problem with this fight is that all your friends and allies believe he's the real Mario and side with him. Some friends they are… but don't attack them, even though the filthy turncoats deserve it. He starts with Goombella, who's fairly weak, but every time you defeat one of your allies he replaces them with a stronger one. You're best off ignoring Goombella and taking the fight directly to Doopliss.
Use your Power Lift, and block Doopliss' attacks – he'll jump at you and use his hammer attack. After a while Vivian will help you out because you're her only friend (makes me sick, all that mushy nonsense…) and your Power Bounces and Sweet Treat, plus her attacks, should put an end to the impostor.

Dr Kitts,
What's all this about feng shui in *Animal Crossing*? Sounds a bit poncy to me, but I'm struggling to get a decent HRA score…
Matt Bunder, Lincoln

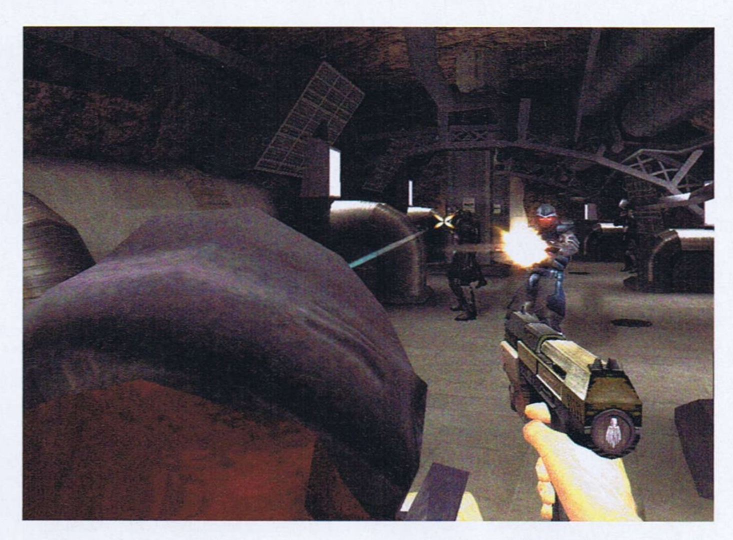
Dr Kitts builds a new patio…
If you stand in the doorway to your house, the wall you're facing (with no door) is 'green'. The one to your left is 'yellow' and to your right is 'red'. The one with the door in is 'orange'. The colours overlap in the corners where the walls meet. The centre of the room is unaffected by this. Putting the right-coloured objects against the appropriate walls will bring you good luck in gaining money and finding items. It won't help your HRA score, though.



Got an Action Replay? Whack these codes into it.







PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN

Master code
QR4T-KW7F-DBR2Y
ME9Q-UHZH-AMTQV

Infinite Sands of Time
Y7RF-YFJ8-KFUP8
20DX-PVB4-DQBUM

Infinite health
VFC1-1Q0Y-Q6WQN
A1PK-NW9Q-W53YV

Unlock all extras
P85D-DG2Q-Z5GK2
FQ97-1C2P-2ET20

CALL OF DUTY FINEST HOUR

Master code
Q8FK-H3F0-2Z202
0E3W-FRQN-NKY4A

Infinite health
4W24-YTX2-TC2N2
J7ZN-C1FR-51W8W
NJRJ-BBBT-70JG8

Unlock all cheats
23H8-JF6X-QBB7D
1VVY-97BG-JPRBA

Unlock all Making of… movies
ABK6-69F8-9JN47
D56J-HQYM-V7065

GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

First section levels open
D1H1-FKPH-X867D
FKN9-83CM-TBG21

Master code
1P2P-ATQQ-HEU6Z
VU78-Y1ZB-M84BN
N18G-1N2T-Z0MMT
0JRN-71AZ-CTTWN
UFMZ-GNHU-V4E16
UY49-HRMU-1N6JW

Never lose health
BNAP-AH3Q-BTJ2A
NW8Q-F6XB-D8X5Q

Never lose armour
QB1H-8CF2-59KQB
DNTY-GBHF-BH1HW

Never lose eye power
6QT5-WJ3Y-ZWQJ5
M37Q-XD3E-1R1D0

Infinite ammo
ZY5N-142Y-Q7DD0
2GBQ-1R3F-JYM03

Stupid enemies
AK3X-HE81-M0074
RPCR-AC3U-MKYUR

Enemies can't throw grenades
PETZ-ZPV9-31YDY
A6GD-H55H-226DB

Unlock multiplayer maps
JF0E-7YQB-4K8JM
DAD6-32Y8-7UWEH

Big arms
UTHM-Y4FH-CXZ93
Y8T5-P4J3-4JVXZ

Can skip intro movies
VG30-0998-YBH2C
YNKX-ZN1V-5W77R

Unlock all missions
(Use this with an empty profile)
HTWF-E2X1-2WMU9
PB02-K3BK-19HWH

Disable shadows
4D5P-GH5J-224RK
AF16-0JD9-ZFV1Y

NGC YOUR TOP TIPS

YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE…

Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a cool prize. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net…

HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi, to help focus your mind.



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HEY! IT'S THE CONTINUATION OF...

GAME ON!

NGC READER CHALLENGES



ou know the score: take one tired, much loved game. Find a new way to play it. The result is prolonged life for your old favourite. Can you find one? We're giving away a brand-new Gamecube game each month to the person who sends in the best one. Just post it to Game On at the usual address!

METROID PRIME









LUCKY, PUNK?

Michael Richardson,
Bristol

Samus' arm cannon is an impressive piece of kit. Not only does it fire pointy kegs o' doom, it can shock enemies and freeze them as well. In fact, the only thing it really lacks is a tin opener. It's the weapon that can do anything. Anything vicious.

Then again, how useful is it all without the handy lock-on feature? Suddenly, those big bad bosses look even more threatening, and the big bad gun ain't looking quite so deadly. Michael wants you to fight and **see exactly how many bosses you can take down by your own "mad skillz" minus the technical trickery of tracking.** Get going! The further you get, the better you'll do. And you've got to reach Flaagrah just to get into the medals.

BOSS BEATEN  **THARDUS**  **PARASITE QUEEN**  **FLAAGRAH**

SUPER SMASH BROS







DON'T MOVE

Edward Gryspeerdt,
Durham

Contrary to popular belief, Nintendo characters aren't fluffy and cuddly. Far from it, in fact – most people, faced with Bowser walking towards them, breathing fire and wreaking devastation, would leg it. Especially if they were a small marshmallow-type thing. And there were three Bowsers. And you had 200% damage ratio on. However, that's exactly what Edward wants you to do. **Choose the Hyrule Temple stage, enemy AI at level 10. You're forbidden from leaving the ledge in the middle. Yes, you are Jigglypuff and yes, your opponents are three Bowsers.** As soon as you even graze a separate piece of land, stop the timer. Let the pummeling commence…

TIME  **1:00+**  **0:30-0:59**  **0:15-0:30**



IKARUGA



PAINFUL PACIFISM

Brian Boitano,
Swansea

As if this finger-crippling blast-'em-up wasn't hard enough already, here's an even more devilish way to play for hardcore types. Hidden in the game is an Easter Egg of sorts, the "Bullet Eater" ranking. Finish a level without shooting a single bullet, and you've earned it. Now, **try to complete the whole game without firing as much as one round.** Hard? Not half. Give yourself a rewarding pat on the back if you even get close to a medal…



LEVELS  ALL   3  1

SUPER MONKEY BALL





LIGHTS, ACTION!

Patrick Robertson,
Northampton

On the first day, God said… "let there be light!" And lo, there it was. Or it may have been a big bang, if you prefer. Either way, quite frankly, we've taken light for granted. Imagine the difficulties you'd have if you were to **try to finish *SMB* without any light** – it's madness, of course, which is why this challenge is based on the idea that having just the map as a source for direction would be fair. He's evil, so he is. No peeking now…

MODE FINISHED  EXPERT  INTER-MEDIATE  BEGINNER

NGC CHALLENGES WANTED

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN…

Have you discovered a weird and wonderful new way to play Nintendo games? Can you sum it all up in about 100 words? If you have a challenge you'd like to share with other NGC readers, then we want to hear about it. Jot down a quick explanation of what you've got to do on a piece of paper, set three suitable levels of achievement for gold, silver and bronze medals, stick it in an envelope, and send it to…

GAME ON, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or email ngc@futurenet.co.uk, with Game On as the subject line.

We'll take challenges for absolutely any game on the good ol' 'Cube, but this month we're particularly interested in…





PIKMIN 2



PAPER MARIO



GOLDENEYE ROGUE AGENT

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES

THE BEST GET PRINTED RIGHT HERE, AND OUR FAVOURITE CHALLENGE WILL WIN A SHINY NEW GAMECUBE GAME. DEAL?

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'…

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your *name and address* so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

The sender of the Star Letter receives a shiny new game from our bulging sack – not necessarily Billy Hatcher or his giant egg. Which one will you receive?

'A question'

I have a question for the Nintendo Gaming Community. What makes the biggest loss for the big 'N'? Answer: the consoles themselves.

Who, with the likes of Mario, Zelda and Metroid, makes the biggest and best games for any system? The answer is 'Nintendo'.

Therefore I pose this question: why do Nintendo still insist on making their own machines, instead of broadening their horizons to the entire market (eg. Sony and Microsoft). I know this sounds controversial but it makes perfect business sense. They could make a huge mark on the market and allow the spread of true Nintendoheads (like myself) to move onto other areas and still get my regular fix of moving blocks onto switches and kicking the living daylights out of Bowser.

I am sure one of the main reasons for not moving would be copyright theft on the other consoles (which is rife) but I can't help but feel there is a sense of pride in their consoles that will rather stubbornly not allow them to move forward as a company. Without R&D of new hardware, they could bring forth peripherals and new games at a fast rate that could revolutionise the whole industry. Maybe THIS is the 'Revolution' they talk of.
Chris Jackson, Burnley

***Pride isn't the reason they continue to develop home consoles – their shareholders wouldn't allow such a big decision to be made based on stubbornness. As long as their big franchises continue to sell to a large proportion of their user base, there's no reason for them to change. They're a profitable company. The situation was completely different for Sega, who still haven't regained their stature after heavy losses killed the Dreamcast. In the long term perhaps there will be one super console that you can play everything on, but for now I don't think any manufacturer is about to back out of the next generation of hardware.* Ed**

'Little trick'

I was shocked to see the '60Hz only' notice in the bottom corner of an email advert for *Metroid Prime 2*. The only 60Hz TV in my house belongs to my brother, and he was annoyed enough at me playing *Animal Crossing* in his room all the time. However, I am not worried since I found out a little trick. My cheap, third-party RF adaptor, which I bought before discovering the composite plugs in the back of my telly, seems to handle 60Hz fine on any game. I'm not sure why but it does, so if you can't afford a new TV but you still want *Metroid* joy, just buy an RF adaptor.
Jacques Hemming, Bodmin

***Intriguing. We haven't seen an RF lead in the office for a good few years now, so can anyone else verify this?* Ed**

Bonus Letters

Just though I'd share my thought of the day.
Nicky Dykes, via email
***Cheers.* Ed**

There's only one word to sum it up.
Kathryn Collinson, via email
***Tsufufum?* Ed**

I'm doing a project on teenage boy magazines.
Jordan Meacher, St Leonards-On-Sea
***Yes!* Ed**

I was in the bathroom one day and I saw one of my mum's 'women magazines'.
Shane Kilpatrick, Northern Ireland
***Stop it now.* Ed**

I am amazed by the graphics on the new Zelda game.
Aaron Fitzgerald, Southampton
***Me too.* Ed**

You are honest.
Joel Magee, Southampton
***Lend us a tenner then. You know I'm good for it.* Ed**

"Dodgy it sounds"

Name one other company that would use the catchphrase 'touching is good' without realising how dodgy it sounds. I was checking out the Nintendo DS official site, which was fairly pleasant until I clicked on the 'touch screen' section. Once there I was treated to a view of a beach – but with the aforementioned catchphrase being written, by some terrifyingly slow invisible hand, into the sand. Touching is good… (Sigh.)
F Murphy, Scotland

***Sadly Nintendo rejected my idea for a whole series of DS 'horror' ads – skeletal fingers approaching unsuspecting shoulders, or scratching at the windows of remote log cabins in the middle of the night.* Ed**

"Hammer down"

Although the DK bongo drums are great with *Donkey Konga*, you have not fully experienced them until you have used them for *Soul Calibur*. Set up a battle with the main controller then swap that with the bongos. Hit the right one to kick, which will bring you close to the opponent, and then just hammer down on them both like there's no tomorrow. Try it, it's really fun.
Dan Mclaren, Manchester

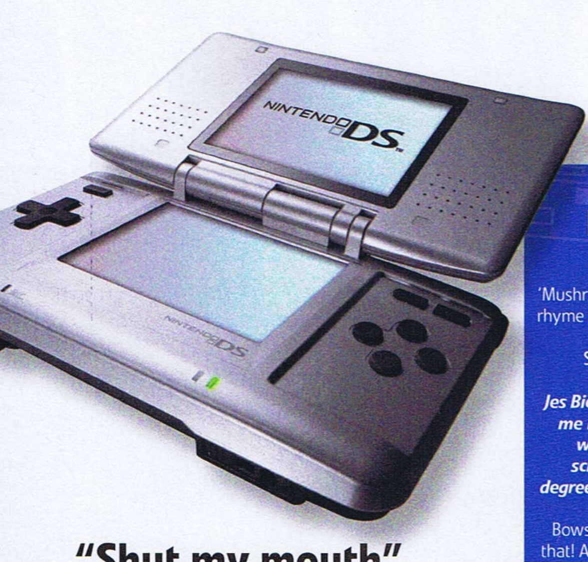
***I haven't enjoyed myself so much since the day I caught a burglar rummaging through my collection of baseball bats.* Ed**





HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to): David Hall, Crawley; Josh Wilkie, Paisley; Håvard Karlsen, Norway; Dave Varley, Llandudno; Jake Madeley, Crewe; Shailen Laxman, Fleet; Hugh Howlett, Cheltenham; Rob Norton, Harrogate; Josiah Mainwaring, via email; Stuart Bartlett, via email; Matthew Duffell, Chorley; Ashley Bernard; Wolverhampton; Mathew Williams, Swansea; Antony Dewar, Nico Binns, London; Walton; Steven Crossley, Bury; Kieran O' Brien; via email; Adam Martin, St Helens; Josh Wilkie, Paisley; Stephen Maclean, Stonehaven; James Baxter, Aberdeen; Jamie Mountain, Fareham; James Richards, Caldicot; Conrad





"Shut my mouth"

Okay, I admit it – when I first heard of DS I was distinctly unimpressed.

Another Nintendo handheld? Nintendo should concentrate on selling more Gamecubes and stop churning out updated Game Boys… Well, shut my mouth! Having read all of **NGC**/101 except for your feature on the DS games, I gave it a go and, to my surprise, found myself getting quite excited. The concepts for *Yoshi's Touch and Go* and *Touch! Kirby's Magic Paint Brush* are genius – something truly original and new, which is something we rely on Nintendo for, seeing as no other company can be bothered to take a risk once in a while. So now I'm looking forward to getting my hands on a DS and am glad that Nintendo have proved me wrong. Not only that, but your write-up on the (far less exciting) DS game *Sprung* can help me with my coursework, so paint me very happy indeed.

Glenn Miller, London

***You're doing coursework based on a dating game?* Ed**

"Final verdict"

I have noticed in your reviews the final percentage does not match up to the marks you give it on visuals, sounds, mastery and lifespan. For example, *Paper Mario 2* got 8, 7, 8, 8 and received 91% whereas *GoldenEye Rogue Agent* received 7, 8, 8, 8 and got 66%. It's a bit strange that two games that received almost exactly the same ratings ended up with a difference of 25% in the final verdict. A quick glance at **NGC**/100 suggests *LoTR* should have got in the 80's and *NFSU2* in the 50's, so I think **NGC** should introduce some sort of 'enjoyment' or 'feel' rating to even the scores out a bit. So if you gave *Paper Mario 2*, 9 or 10 in enjoyment and gave *GoldenEye* 4 or 5 it would be much more understandable why the difference in the rating was so big.

Antoin Lindsay, Northern Ireland

***Well, there's no scientific formula for determining ratings, and some games do just have that elusive 'something'. Adding more categories might confuse things even more, and we're so set in our ways that if our daily routine were to change, it would resemble a scene from One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest in here. And I don't want to have to take everyone out into the car park to hose them down again, not at this time of year.* Ed**

Bonus Letters

NGC/101: 'Mushrooms' does not rhyme with 'cruel' you stupid people.
Stephen Clarke, via email
***Jes Bickham assures me it does, and he went to a public school and has a degree in English.* Ed**

Bowser is so not like that! All that torturing and weird machines that Bowser put on Wario's back. That is so not his style. Bowser's not evil, he's just a loser who loses all the time. Bowser is not like that!
Andrew Clarke, E Yorks
***Right.* Ed**

Not even the Final Boss killed me. I won't go into it because of the people who haven't completed it yet.
Stephen Hudson, Caldicot
***Much appreciated.* Ed**

I think you should have given *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* a better score because I think it is a good game plus it was your cover story.
Gavin Leith, Tarporley
***We put* Gex 64: Enter The Gecko *on the cover once.* Ed**

"Something extra"

I was browsing **NGC**/101 when I saw that the advert for *Metroid Prime 2* had a Nintendo DS hidden in the corner. I thought this was a nice touch by Nintendo. This brings me to another point – when I was playing *Animal Crossing*, I opened one of my neighbours' wardrobes and got the message, 'You've found 100 rupees! You can't use them here, though…'

This is the sort of thing that makes all the difference in a game, whether it's Pikmin in the grass on *Mario Golf* or poking fun at Nintendo history in *Wind Waker*. The really good Nintendo games always seem to have something extra. The originality is occasionally questionable, but with classics out there like *Mario 64* and *Ocarina of Time*, who needs to worry? If Nintendo are around, I don't think that good games and consoles to play them on are going to be limited.

Jack Eden, via email

***I'm feeling a whole lotta Ninty love here.* Ed**

"Really made"

I can't believe I found this shop! I was walking down a street I've never walked down before, when I found the 'NES Recruitment Centre'. Could this be where the NES was really made? Could Shigsy be secretly English? Could something have happened in this shop that made Nintendo hate Europe?

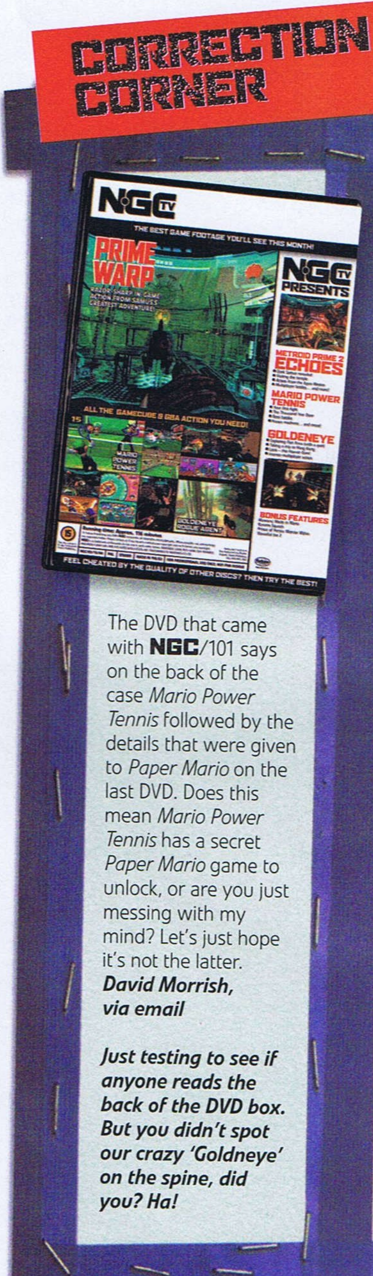
Neil Harris, Sale

***If that place is near the SNES Pound Shop and the N64 Personal Loans Company, I think you might be onto something.* Ed**



△ Could that be Shigsy's personal limo parked outside the shop where the NES was born?

CORRECTION CORNER



The DVD that came with **NGC**/101 says on the back of the case *Mario Power Tennis* followed by the details that were given to *Paper Mario* on the last DVD. Does this mean *Mario Power Tennis* has a secret *Paper Mario* game to unlock, or are you just messing with my mind? Let's just hope it's not the latter.

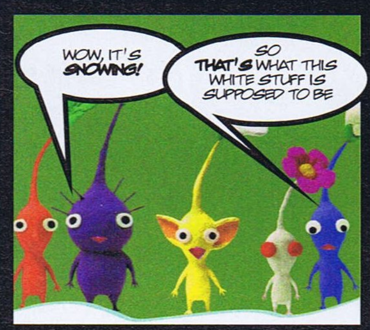
David Morrish, via email

Just testing to see if anyone reads the back of the DVD box. But you didn't spot our crazy 'Goldneye' on the spine, did you? Ha!

Stroebel, Netherlands; Tim Lennox, Glasgow; David Barber, Sunderland; James Rowntree, Addlestone; Edmund King, Wadhurst; James Bowden, via email; Gareth Whitlock, via email; Samantha Lawrence, Buxton; Mike Blogg, Witney; Liam McCaffrey, Sheffield; James Wright, Thornton Heath; Michael Fenton, Livingston; Stephen Ashby, Dorset; Sam Rose, Bingham; Eoin Connolly, Ireland; Bjoern Dvergastein, via email; Tom Board, via email; Edward Hebbourn, via email; Darren Revell, Plymouth; Graeme Meredith, Peterborough; Jon Zalot, Anglesey; Peter Hume, Belfast; Andrew Wynne, Banbury; Mark Chapman, Cardiff; Lee Horscraft, Newhaven; Marcus Canning-Evans, Bath; Joshua Daly, Birmingham; Thanks, everyone.

GriNteNdo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. BUT IF MR WHITE FAILS TO SEE THE FUNNY SIDE, THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY.
THIS MONTH: JOKE INFLICTED BY OLLIE YOUNG









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

"Reversed"

On closer inspection of the *Mario Kart Double Dash* box, the front cover itself has Mario and Luigi riding in their kart. If you take a look at the symbol on Luigi's cap you can see that it is the wrong way round, clearly showing that the spine of the L is absent on the left and that it is reversed. How can such a mistake be allowed to be distributed nationwide, and who was responsible for the cover? One thing's for sure, Luigi must have got up on the wrong side of bed that day. Or is this some kind of conspiracy?

Steven Limm, Tamworth

***Well spotted. I thought it was only Paul who made that kind of mistake.* Ed**

"Sword arm"

After reading the arguments about whether Link is left- or right-handed, I noted on which hand Link favours to operate his equipment. In fact, the only weapon he uses with just his right hand, apart from his shield, is the hookshot in *Ocarina*. Link always favours use of his left hand, ergo he is left-handed. Also worth noting is the fact that Link is the only character in all the Zelda games to hold his sword in his left hand. Every other NPC carries their weapon with their right hand.

Jon Salter [letters **NGC**/101] might like to explain his theories on the use of the left hand as the sword arm. The sword replaced the spear and javelin, throwing weapons usually thrown with the right arm, while the heavy shield was worn on the left. After the spear was thrown the fighter would draw his sword with his right hand, because to drop his shield would be suicidal. A sword is a weapon that requires a great deal of dexterity to use. A shield is primarily a defensive tool. When it is used as a weapon, like a bludgeoning tool, it requires little skill, and when used as a battering ram you can use either arm, so having it on your favoured hand doesn't make any sense.

Being left-handed was viewed with mistrust and scorn. The word left come from an Old Norse word meaning weak; the word dextrous comes from Latin dexter, meaning on the right side or skilful. The opposite word in Latin is sinistra, meaning on the left, and is where the English word sinister comes from. Other languages also have negative meanings for left. Maybe he would also like to explain why movies choreographed by acclaimed experts in sword fighting seem to be obsessed with having the sword placed in the right hand and the shield on the left, in films like Lord of the Rings, Star Wars etc. I hope this finally buries this argument.

Carl Padgham, Hastings

***Thanks for the history lesson (of which the letter above is merely an abridged portion). I think the fact that Link's creator is also left-handed might settle this once and for all.* Ed**

"Much fun"

I'm excited to hear that Skill Club is making a return to the pages of **NGC**, so I'm writing in to encourage as many people to join as possible. I'm The Best was a great competition, very challenging and competitive. Skill Club should hopefully continue the trend, but it's only possible if more people enter. I must say that after 17 months of ITB, it's so good be be relieved of the burden of more challenges. ITB went on arguably a little too long, but if there was one thing that I learned from it, it's to get involved.

I joined ITB just as my interest in games was beginning to wane. I was leaving home for university, and the thought of staying in and playing on my Gamecube just wasn't as alluring as going out and living the student life.

ITB did two things: it made me a better gamer, that much is obvious, but it also made gaming better for me. After continuous practice, I managed to appreciate games so much more than I have done previously. But even better than that is that now the weight is off my shoulders, I am playing games for fun again. It feels great! I feel like somebody who's allowed to eat whatever they like after a year and a half of eating only bread. I'm playing games through to completion, one at a time, and it's so satisfying. All this is down to ITB, and the same can be achieved with Skill Club. Gaming has never been so much fun; and at the end of the day, that's what it's all about.

Matthew Pellett, Spalding

***The all-new Skill Club will be open for business from next issue, folks.* Ed**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Got questions? The NGC motherbrain got game (and answers)

At the risk of being flagellated to within an inch of my life and having pegs attached to my earlobes, I've noticed you've been talking a lot about Kid Icarus, that sublime 8-bit wonder starring the winged master and the death music of a children's birthday party. Is there anything on the cards for him, GBA, Gamecube or otherwise as it was a very classy game and could do with an update (although probably not being 3D-ised)? Well? Eh? Its's the last time I'll ask, promise.

Chris Hawkins, via email

We've heard nothing about Kid Icarus. We just like talking about him.

In the American release list there are releases for the GBA after the launch of DS. Does this mean that there will be GBA games released after the DS launch or are they actually DS games?

Mike Yeomans, via email

There are millions of GBAs out there, so we're likely to see GBA releases continue for a long time. There's also the potential for GBA games to have enhanced features on DS, so maybe we'll get a few dual-format titles.

1. Will there ever be a Soul Calibur 3?
2. How much does DS cost on import?
3. When is Mario Tennis coming to Europe?

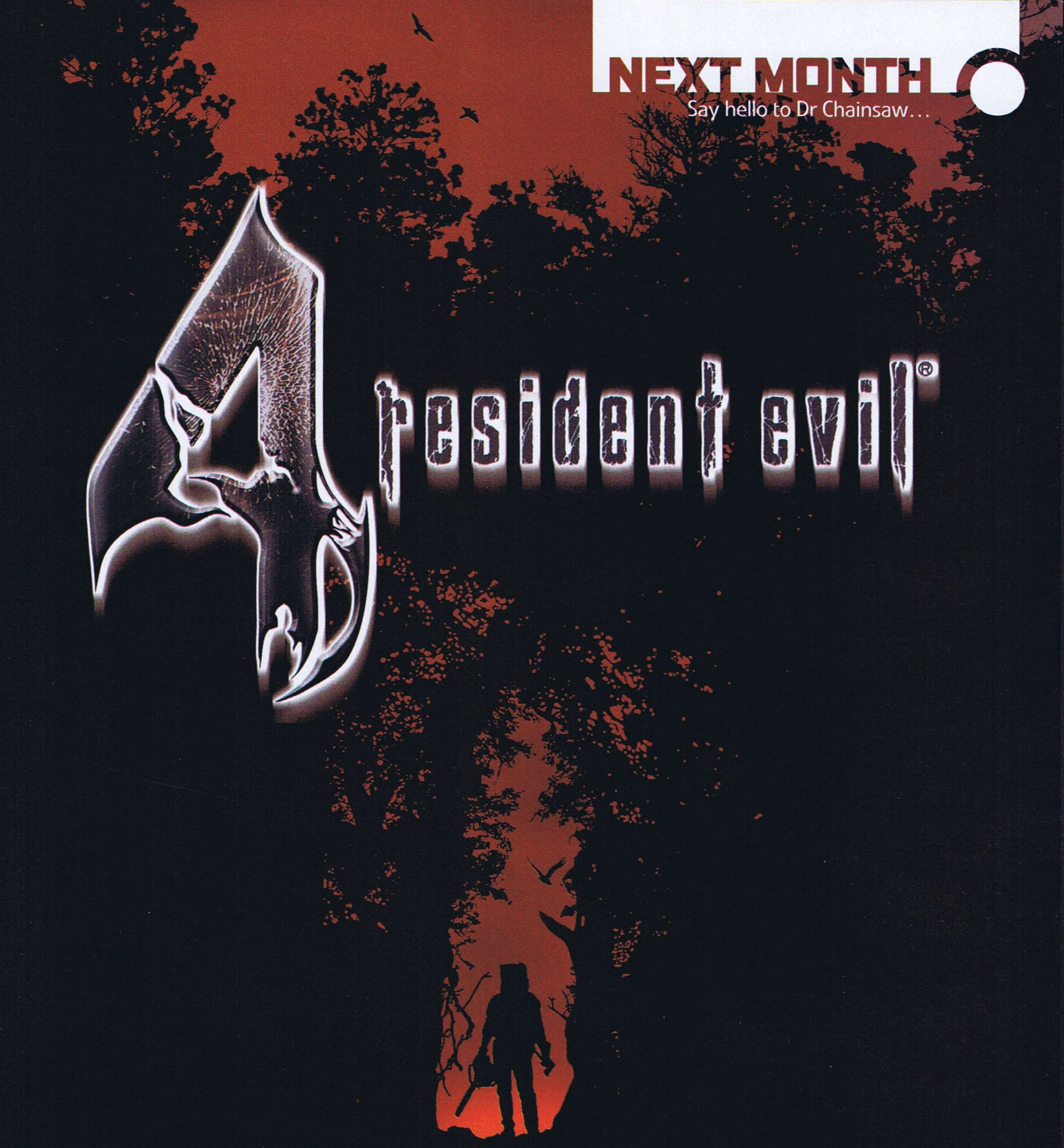
Ben Costigane, Cheltenham

1. Almost certainly, although there's no telling which consoles it will be released for. The Gamecube version of the last one was the biggest selling out of all three formats.
2. Expect to pay no more than £120 with postage, although you may get stung for import duty and a Post Office 'handling fee' if the customs people take an interest in your box of goodies.
3. End of February.

1. Is there going to be an original Mario or Zelda game for DS?
2. What happened to the GBA-Gamecube link-up thing? Hardly any games seem to have it now.

Jason Sharpe, via email

1. There's a new 2D Mario game that uses polygon graphics on the way, and a Zelda title is also in the works. Whether or not either is based on an old design remains to be seen.
2. Four Swords is a recent example, but it's one of the few. If they had wanted to make it a popular feature Nintendo should have included a GC link cable with every GBA. But they didn't, and I'd be surprised if many games use the link-up in the future.



THE REVIEW

- Timesplitters: Future Perfect – the final verdict.
- Hands-on with Star Fox: Assault.
- All the build up to the UK DS release.
- Plus another great free gift!

Magazine contents subject to change – but only for the better!

Don't settle for second best. Get NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING

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1UP 00 HIGH SCORE 10000

FIRST AMONG UNEQUALS

The best of Gamecube's opening levels.

PRESS START

ONE PLAYER ONLY

1ST BONUS AFTER 20000 PTS

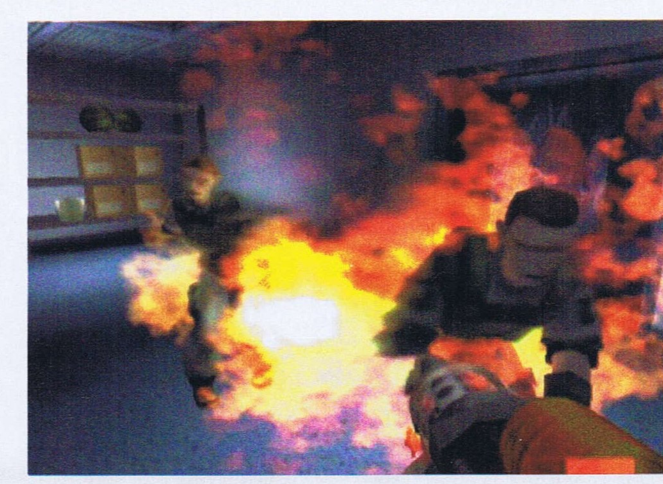
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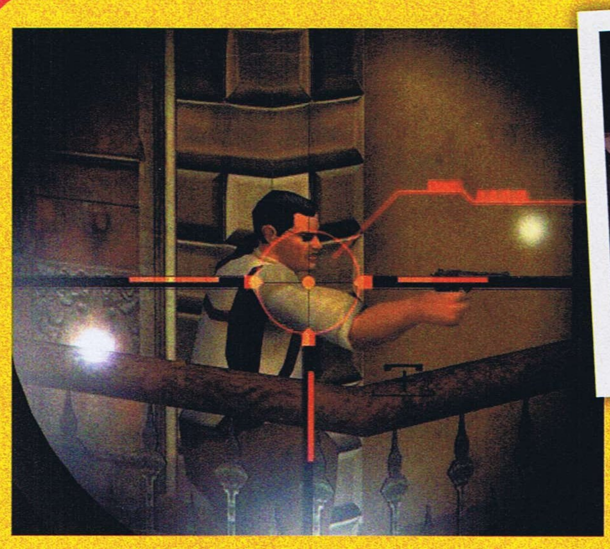


Admit it: the first levels of games are often the best. In a film or book, the dollar-drenched special effects or big plot twists go into the middle or end – and they're the bits you remember. But cast your mind back to a game, and it's probably the first environment proper that'll burst into your consciousness. *Metal Gear Solid*: wintry heliport. *Wind Waker*: opening island, or that first fiery dungeon. *Prince of Persia*: besieged palace exterior. See?

It's partly because your mind's been injected full of Level One thanks to pre-release screenshots and demos invariably focusing on the game's first section. And partly, of course, because it's your first trembling experience of that game you've been waiting ages for. But it's also a question of quality. *Hitman 2* is the perfect example: filled right up to the shiny peak of Agent 47's hairless head with great moments… that never *quite* manage to outshine the brilliantly open-ended mafia mansion break-in at the start.

Make no mistake, a first level is often intentionally made to display an all-conquering level of quality.







HITMAN 2
ANATHEMA

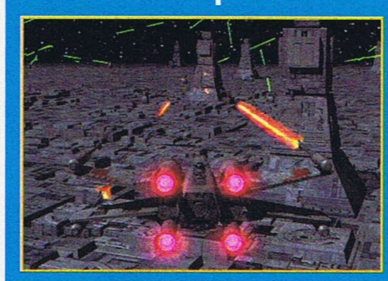
A glittering (if by 'glittering', you mean 'bloody') introduction to the open-ended play that permeates *Hitman 2*. There are so many ways to infiltrate Mr Big's big house: deck a postman and steal his clothes; kill a delivery boy and hide your gun in his basket; sneak in the back after piano-wiring a urinating footsoldier. The mansion itself is a lesson in the terror of cowering behind a door while a guard's radar blob slowly moves your way.

Rivalled by: Invitation to a Party. Another big ol' explorable mansion, and Agent 47, in a waiter's garb, mingling among unsuspecting dinner party attendees. A party to remember.

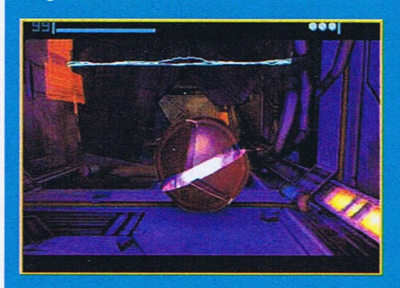
JACOB ANDERSEN
IO INTERACTIVE

"This was the level used to test the game's engine – and it was chosen to be used in an early demo – so it got some special attention. For testing purposes we put in more ways to complete this level than you'll find in most of the others, so I'd tend to agree that it's the best. But I also think the last levels of a game should be special, as there should be some reward for actually completing the game."

FALSE START
The exception that proves the 'first level is best' rule... make that exceptions.



STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER
A not-so-hot tower blast with a "bad feeling". Had everyone who played it wondering how long it was until the Death Star trench run.



METROID PRIME
Samus doesn't really get cooking until Retro have finished trying to wrap a third dimension around the traditional spaceship escape-race.



Free Radical's David Doak – veteran game genius behind *TimeSplitters 2* and its memorable Siberian starter – compares games to Bond films, in that it's best to pull out some sense-tingling goodness right from the word go and hook the gamer in like a happy little fish. "It's important to open with something memorable and not to hide away your best features," he says. "A poor first level will shape someone's entire perception of the game – they might even decide that they've seen enough and not want to go on."

Fair enough. But why can't the remaining 90-odd percent of a game maintain that first-hour magic? "Ideally the rest of the game should show the same level of innovation and depth," says David. "But you should remember that games are made in the real world and real people are working to real deadlines and financial and time limitations."

That betrays the biggest reason why opening levels are often so good – because, appropriately enough, they were first. First to be created, first to be properly implemented and tested, first to have a serious amount of intensive work done on them for show previews or demo discs (which are often put out months and sometimes years before the full game's released) and the first to be finished.

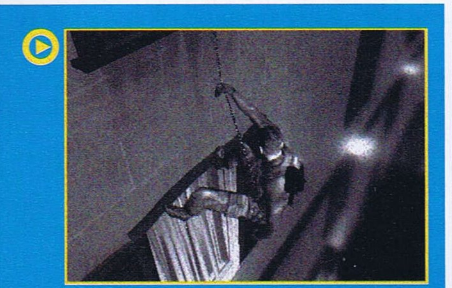
So at a time when most of a game's bits and pieces are still being built or, in the worst cases, just getting started, that first level is basking in the glow of 'bonus time' spent polishing, rethinking and perfecting. It's no surprise that an opening world like *Super Mario Sunshine's* Delfino Plaza (which was probably given special attention as the first *SMS* area to be publicly unveiled at Nintendo's Spaceworld show in 2001) ends up as a game's most stunning – and that by comparison later levels have that little *something* missing.

> **"LATER LEVELS HAVE THAT LITTLE SOMETHING MISSING"**



There's no particular reason why the first level should be the first out of the starting gate (games, like films, aren't usually created 'in order') but it often turns out that way. And in fact, when an opening level doesn't shine as brightly as its brothers, it's usually a good sign that it was a late starter in development terms. 'Doctor' Doak says that the opening Dam level from his N64 classic *GoldenEye* was "set up much later than other levels, largely due to problems with accommodating the size of the environment". Sure enough, ask anyone to reminisce about *GoldenEye* and they'll barely mention the Dam in their nostalgic jabberings about dropping into the Facility toilets, chasing Trevelyan around the Cradle or protecting the idiot Natalya.

We've revisited what we think are Gamecube's best beginning bits on these pages. And we bet we've upset you by missing out your best-remembered Level One, so feel free to tell us *your* favourite via the power of email, text or ink.



SPLINTER CELL
The seminal Clancy-driven stealther kicked off with a rubbish training section, then sank lower with a confusing creep around a blazing police station.

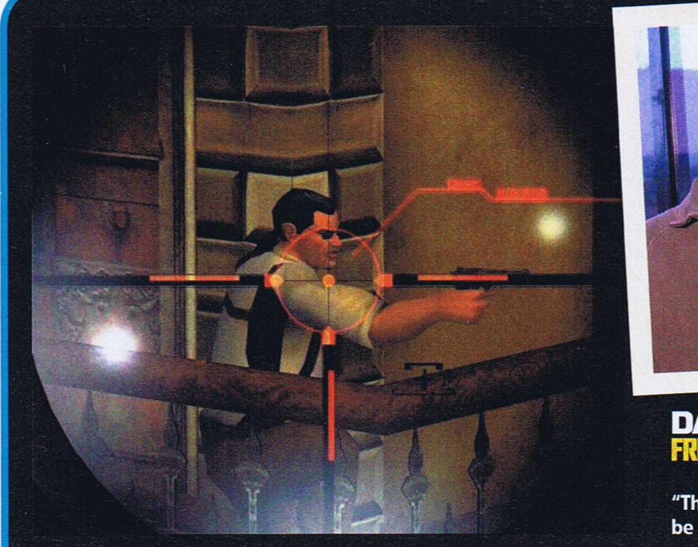


SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
Otherwise known as *Super Mario Bros. 2*, and probably our worst memory of little Mario thanks in part to the vertical-scrolling flip-screen tedium at the start.



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH
Unfair? Even the most ham-fistedly inept karters don't want to be taught how to drive on a featureless NASCAR track, Mr Nintendo.

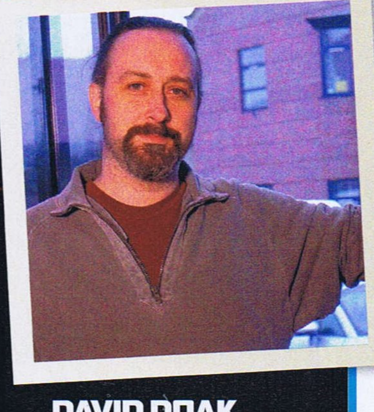




TIMESPLITTERS 2
SIBERIA 1990

We knew this would be *TS2's* standout level when early videos revealed it as something of a tribute to N64's revered *GoldenEye 007*. But it was so much more, the introductory stealth-based exterior segueing into to an all-action zombie-shotgunning interior (complete with detachable, bouncing zombie heads) and, eventually, the slap-yourself realisation that seemingly invisible snipers could actually be spotted, targeted and killed.

Rivalled by: There's nothing like Notre Dame, where you're aiding a gun-toting hunchback one minute and hammering holes in a monster the size of Bridgwater Tesco's the next.



DAVID DOAK
FREE RADICAL DESIGN

"This was the first *TS2* level to be 'set up' (actually have enemies and props placed, and guard behaviour scripted) because it was the basis of a demo prepared about a year before the game's actual release. As such, it served as a test bed for many game features: expansive exteriors, stealth sections, destructible melons, flaming zombies and so on. Almost all of the new features in *TS2* were originally tested on this level and then migrated through to other ones. I think it's fair to say it's the best level."



IKARUGA
CHAPTER ONE: IDEAL

A triumph of retro game design, where wave upon wave of evil spaceship scum is intricately designed and timed first to get amateurs used to the black/white shooting system, and second to get experts racking up those chain combos in ways that would make the brain of anyone over 40 snap clean in two. The joy is in the sense of accomplishment – *Ikaruga* chucks you right back to alien one when you die, so there's a tangible pleasure in improving your score on each play, and learning the almost symphonic rhythms behind what's happening.

Rivalled by: Level two. If only because we can't really remember much about level three before we blacked out.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
THE LIGHTHOUSE

More a first 'bit' than a first level, but a giant fluttering flag for *BG&E's* specialness from the moment the opening battle becomes a mesmeric slo-mo sequence with ethereal choir music. From there, you're free to explore Jade's gorgeous lighthouse home (with surreal, mildly sinister piano accompaniment), step out into the crisply atmospheric hilltop meadow that surrounds it, and gaze out at an entire sea filled with honking ships. And, eventually, meet a talking pig.

Rivalled by: The atmospheric Pedestrian District, BladeRunner-style future city of shops, bars and a busy aquatic spaghetti junction.



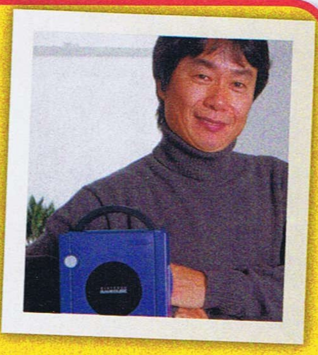
METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

GC's ultimate version of history's Hollywoodiest game is full of goodness, but it's that first section that sticks in the head – crawling under the pipe, then dodging searchlights and guards saying 'Uh?' in the heliport. A showcase for *The Twin Snakes*' best touches – multiple exits, footprints, hidden ammo – and a chance for the cut-scene coders to grab centre-stage with that moment where Liquid senses Solid's presence just before the game title crashes onto the screen.

Rivalled by: For our money you can't beat that cleverly-implemented torture chamber.







THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

DRAGON ROOST CAVERN

The opening island – all secret bits and sense of wonder – isn't bad, but this first dungeon is a proper lesson in *Zelda*-style stunnology. Beautiful plumes of fiery volcanic anger show off the cel-shaded visuals to gob-opening effect, then you're taken up and around the mountain with both classic puzzles (lighting torches; pushing blocks) and newer ideas (grabbing enemy weapons to smash open doors) as your guide. And if you can recall a *Wind Waker* boss better than Mr Screaming Multi-Eyes there, you've got a fatter brain than us.

Rivalled by: The Tower of the Gods, a water-based temple that rises from the sea like a great big amazing rising thing.

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
NINTENDO

"When I first saw the cel-shaded Zelda I was very surprised and excited by it. However, I was startled by the response we got from the press when we showed it off the first time. They all said, "Oh, so is Nintendo now taking Zelda and trying to aim it only at kids?" Really, the whole concept we had behind it was that we thought it was a very creative and new way to show off Link. All of a sudden it had been interpreted as Nintendo's new strategy, and that was a shock for us."





TAKASHI TEZUKA
NINTENDO

"At first [we] created Isle Delfino with clay, in the shape of a dolphin... Rather than dwelling on the game's merely attractive points, I know that the players will feel joy in their bones as soon as they start playing. The world of Mario is a kind of miniature garden in which players can move around as they like – that is certainly the case with *Super Mario Sunshine*."

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

DELFINO PLAZA

Say what you like about how *SMS* compares to its N64 dad, Delfino Plaza shows exactly what Nintendo and Mario are all about, a virtual playground where there are no invisible barriers or blocked-off bits to stop you testing Mario's repertoire of FLUDD-aided moves. It's crammed with cute touches (squirtable birds, fruit that can be kicked), typically Nintendo 'bits of level you can't quite reach yet' and music you'll still be humming as they lower you into your grave.

Rivalled by: The big, beautiful Noki Bay, with diverse missions aplenty (remember Mario shrinking down to explore a tiny world inside a bottle? It's absolute genius) and *almost* no Piranha Plants.

PROPHESYING THE NEWS OF TOMORROW WITH REAL-LIFE FUTUROLOGY

MADAME GREENER *Predicts...*

Looking into the future through crossed eyes...

THIS MONTH: EUROPEAN DS LAUNCH

Just look at Nintendo DS go! It's America's new favourite thing after hamburgers and elastic trousers that stretch with your gut, and is sailing off the shelves so fast that Nintendo are probably running out of the plastic and metal they use for the little stylii (yes, that is the plural, thanks). Will Europe be gazing its love-eyes at DS, too? You want to ask some rolled-up paper, mate.

AN AD THAT READS "DON'T WORRY – YOU'RE NOT SEEING DOUBLE"

1 Wherever a Nintendo console goes in Europe, there's usually an embarrassingly fashionable marketing campaign strutting along behind it – with a backwards baseball cap on. But it looks like the dude-talkin' marketeers will be behaving themselves for DS, because this depressingly uninventive ad line was on the first paper tube to unroll. Good news, given that it was up against "Stacking TVs on top of each other in Trafalgar Square" and "Rolling out endorsements from celebrity twins".

2 Unlike some of Madame Greener's more 'out there' methods – like reading eggs – this paper-steaming lark doesn't leave you rubbing your brain for a vague interpretation. So when we want to know if DS will sell like hot cakes, we write "DS will sell like hot cakes" on a piece of paper, and when it's the first roll to unravel (before the ones with "will sell like warm cakes" and "will sell like cold cakes with mould on" daubed across them), that must mean DS will sell like hot cakes. Easy, this, isn't it?

NINTENDO DS WILL SELL LIKE HOT CAKES

WILL THE EURO LAUNCH OF DS BE SUBJECT TO ANY LAST-MINUTE HITCHES?

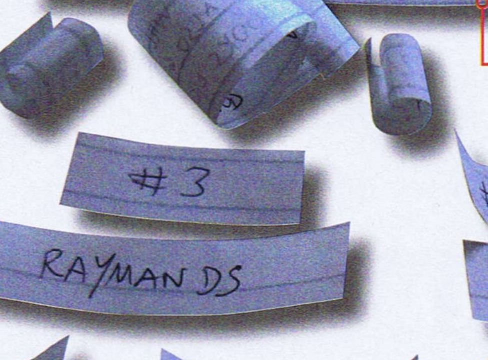
BADGER

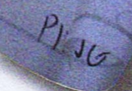
3 Write a question on a bit of paper, and you can see how likely the answer is 'Yes!' by watching how fast it writhes open. "Will the Euro launch of Nintendo DS suffer any last-minute hitches?" *was* a speedy little fella – so, anxious for more, we picked three random words out of the dictionary and bunged them in the pot. We can't really remember *why* we did this exactly, but now we're stuck with the results: "badger" beats both "fibula" and "blueberry". So there may be a, er, last-minute badger problem for DS. We're dying here.

CAKES

4 Here's our blank piece of paper. Still no idea what it's for.

5 Getting into the swing of things, we run the steam through some likely launch games, as well as the numbers from one to ten. The idea? Match up papers with similar amounts of 'unroll' to foretell the shape of the charts in DS Week One. The result? *Rayman DS* crashes in at number three, knocking *Super Mario DS* into fourth place. And! Both '1' and '2' retain their swiss roll look - so perhaps punters will avoid game-spend and stick with *PictoChat* and that *Metroid Prime: Hunters* demo?





AND THE PREDICTIONS...

No 'trend-setting' Nintendo marketing campaigns this time – so no Des Lynam in a glass box or whatever.

Nintendo executives sew new extra-large cash-pockets into their trousers after Nintendo DS "does a blinder" in the EU and the banknotes roll in.

A badger to be somehow involved in messing up the launch of DS.

Rayman DS in first-week sales victory shocker – but overall DS game sales to be relatively disappointing.

Something startling involving a blank piece of paper.

Madame Greener's predictions will be taken in for questioning in a future issue.

THE METHOD
SYCOMANCY

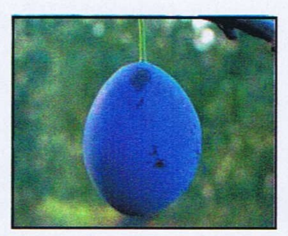
Another month, another whacky fortune-telling method from the loopy old bat. We didn't even know this one existed – and we wish we hadn't discovered it.

Sycomancy

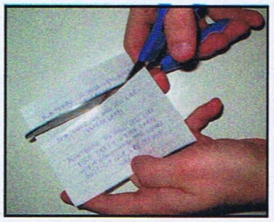
Sycomancy is a form of divination which is concerned with dete
are written on leaves or paper and then put through a process su
is first to finish, or in the case of burning, to survive the process c

Sycomancy, in its form that requires burning, has been used to s

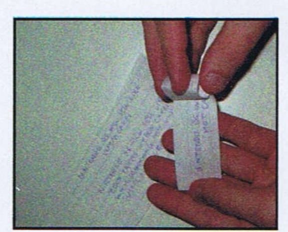
1. To us, it's watching bits of rolled-up paper wriggle themselves flat when you steam them. To witches, halflings and horse-men, it's the fine art of "Sycomancy".



2. Get facted: this form of future-guessing was originally done by writing questions on fig leaves – and 'syco' is Latin for fig. (*Actually it's Greek, you cretin* – Ed.)



3. We use paper. The authorities say that, for some reason, one bit of paper must be left blank. That's easy: just don't write on it. The authorities do not tell us why we're doing it, but it Must Be Done.



4. After the cutting, the rolling. The Hands here used a smooth-action pair of scissors from W H Smith. Our instructions say nothing about making the pieces the same size. So we won't bother.



5. Finally, bung the rolled-up strips in a strainer over warm water. The ones that unroll fastest are the truest. *They* say.

TOP 10: NINTENDO FACTS

The real history of Nintendo. And by 'real', we mean 'not real'.

1

Nintendo®

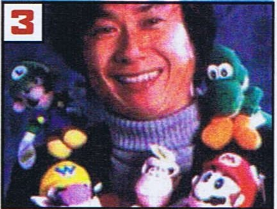
MEANING
'Nintendo' is a Dutch word that means 'behind the wooden gate in the field with the chestnut tree'.

2



CASH
The secret rooms in *Super Mario Bros* were based on Nintendo's cellar, where Yamauchi kept all the money he'd stolen from widows and small children. The corpses and bloody trident were left out.

3



MIYAMOTO
Shigsy was manufactured in a special laboratory and has 15 reject siblings who are only brought out at Christmas. He has been designed so his teeth fall out if he thinks about leaving Nintendo.

4



OLD GAMES
Nintendo's first games in 1888 included *Malevolent Invaders from Our Moon, Penny-Farthing Races at Speeds to Cause Faintitude in the Hardiest of Men*, and *Remarkably Efficient Duo of Plumbing Gentlefolk*.

5



YOSHI
Miyamoto believes that all his characters are based on living things. In 1995, he told interviewers that Yoshi was a dinosaur that walked the Earth in the 'Yoshiaozic Era' and threw eggs at T-Rexs.

6



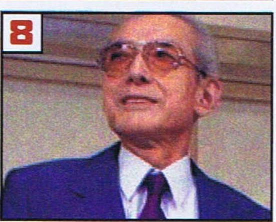
FRUSTRATION
At Nintendo's original HQ in Kyoto, people were paid by the hour to walk around the building in Mario and Luigi costumes and get wrestled to the ground by frustrated, overworked programmers.

7



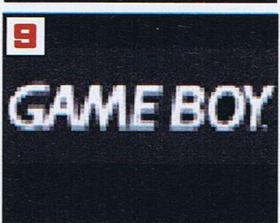
UK NES
The UK launch of the NES was publicised by a man in a red suit running along Brighton Pier muttering, "Games... games... games". It's Nintendo UK's highest yearly marketing expenditure to date.

8



ERROR
Following a 1985 April Fool's joke on Hiroshi Yamauchi that went horribly wrong, Nintendo took itself to the US Supreme Court in 1985 in a bid to ban itself from selling its own games.

9

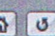


BIG BOY
The press accused Nintendo of "missing the point entirely" in 1985 when it released the first Game Boy, which was the size of a radiator and could only be played by plugging it into your television.

10



HANDS
Before the advent of computers, Nintendo had to make all its videogames by hand, painstakingly drawing each frame of animation directly onto people's television screens.


http://www.internetcorrespondent.co.uk

YOUR INTERNET CORRESPONDENT

The best of the 'net several weeks after it happens.

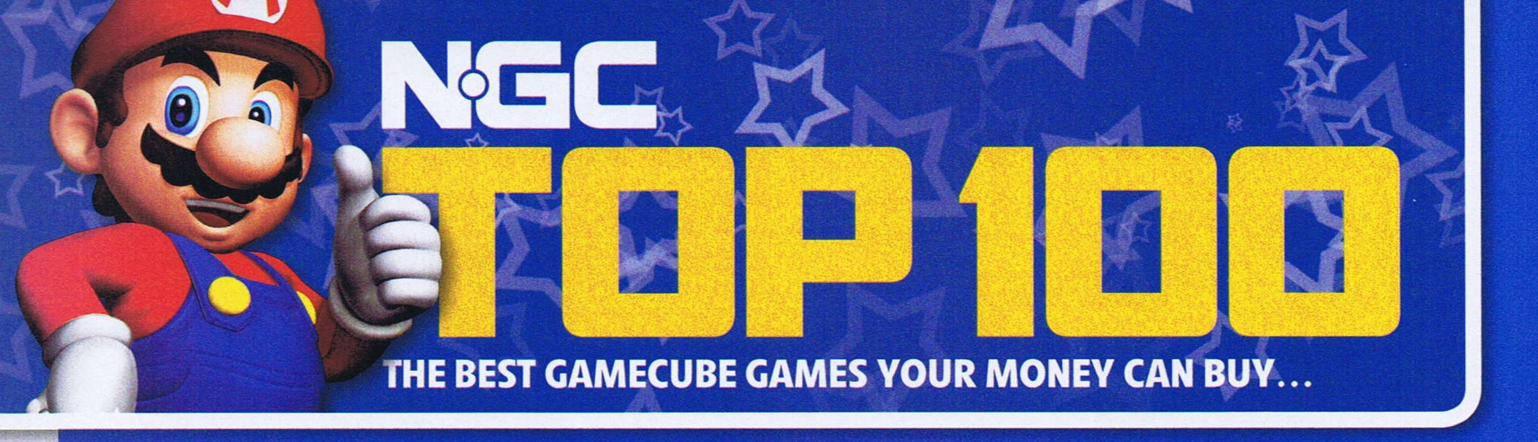
• NGC reader Adam Butcher writes, "There's a cool site that's made its own board game to be played with **Super Smash Bros**, making it a sort of Smash Bros Party. They've called it 'Show Me Your Moves' after Captain Falcon's catchphrase. Clever, eh?" Certainly is - but forget about the board game, just look at the pictures of the site owners re-enacting a **Smash Bros** battle in full regalia. It's nearly as good as when we got you lot to 'be' Roy.
> www.smym.cjb.net
>

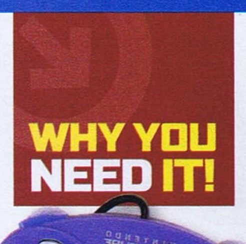
• "No Way, Not In My Home, Tough Guy." That's the calling cry of Mothers Against Videogame Addiction and Violence, who "recommend getting professional psychiatric help" for anyone 'diagnosed' with "videogame addiction". You can buy a MAVAV badge or t-shirt for your mum so she can show solidarity - but, sadly, articles such as "E3: The Evil Entertainment Expo" and "Video Game Networks or Online Training Camps?" are currently offline.
> www.mavav.org/
>

• You're going to wish you'd been born in Japan when you see this. It's a set of six Mario 'dioramas' - little 3D scenes from **Super Mario Bros** - that you can stick on the mantelpiece to make visitors sick their breakfast up with jealousy. They've just launched a new set which, with Bowser and Bullet Bill and Lakitu, look even better than the first lot. And of course, we lied about the 'being born in Japan' thing - thanks to advances in technology you can always order them off the internet.
> www.gkworld.com/product/GKW01365
>

• If you want to make Shigeru Miyamoto breathe furious fire out of his eyes, you only have ask him to make a new version of forgotten NES platformer **Kid Icarus** - something that misguided fans of games starring flying portly cherub boys have been doing for years now, to our constant amusement. They've even got an online petition up with a whopping **202 signatures** so far - and the comments (eg "Booya grandma!") are quite the read.
> www.petitiononline.com/nint1459/petition.html

//got a link?//
Got a Nintendo-related link for Your Internet Correspondent? Email it to ngcyic@hotmail.com



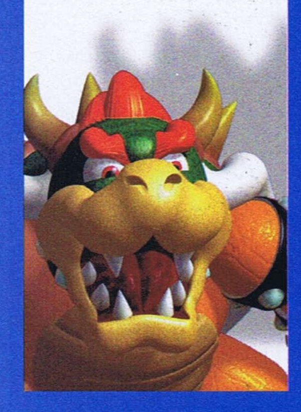




Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you?..**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film, and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, and it's pretty short, but this is as close to 'art' as 'games' have been yet.













2 METROID PRIME 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible, and there's no slow down at all, despite the fact that the environments are huge and detailed. The action's varied, with a broad range of bosses, and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play – on any system.







3 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those...





4 METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES — 94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our one complaint.







5 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!! — 93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

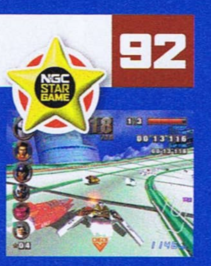
Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pickup boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells and giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lotta fun.



6 F-ZERO GX — 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

Blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep the pace up without getting the frame rate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would've been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?







7 PIKMIN 2 — 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to earth for a longer session of collecting 'treasure'. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.



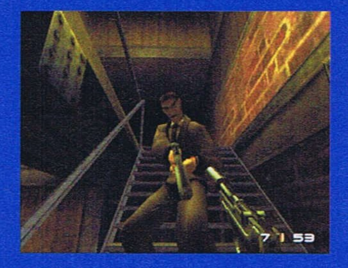
8 SOUL CALIBUR 2 — 91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the three hidden characters – but the real star of the show's not hidden! For the Gamecube version, Namco have dropped in Link, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.







9 TIMESPLITTERS 2 — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

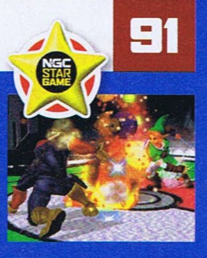
Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'Splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate and you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. And you *will* love every minute. The multiplayer's the icing on the cake.



10 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites (and a few Nin-non-entities) get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

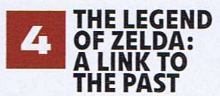
Cute-looking turn-based strategy, with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.

3 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements starring our two top plumbers.



4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.

5 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level designs ever.

6 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…

7 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.

8 METROID FUSION/ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.

9 HARVEST MOON

A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It'll last you months.

10 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player.



DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/91

Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change… Despite a new 'chapter' structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…

12 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Bald barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly – but how else you go about it is up to you, because this is freeform gaming at its finest.

13 PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME — 91

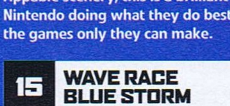
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubi Soft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey… but really, it all reeks of quality. Superb.

14 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

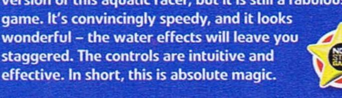
With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.



15 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

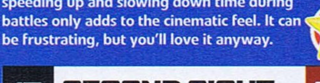
A few tiny frame rate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy, and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.



16 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the cinematic feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.



17 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.



18 METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

Superb stealth action and a great story combine with revamped graphics to make this old PlayStation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. The only problems are the long, unskippable cut-scenes, the short length and possibly too many bosses. We're just picky…

19 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great, it's wonderfully fast, and then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring round the streets, Crash mode gives you the opportunity to beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.

20 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAMES — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's wholeheartedly original, outlandishly quirky and good fun. What's more, because you can put in your own name and store your records, it handicaps experienced players so less able ones can play on an equal footing.

21 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 1 & 2 — 90

ATARI ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one of *those*. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this. Don't risk 'em.

22 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trialling modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off your time for months.

23 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full 'teenaged Dr Moreau' experience can be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow it's horribly addictive, as you improve your house, fill the museum and get a life.

24 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

ATARI ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll devour vast chunks of your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest (for some missing moonstones) are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping. Looks dated now.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
A tour-de-force of everything good gaming should be.

PRINCE OF PERSIA
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Yes, it's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC
Can't touch *Sunshine*, but it's entertaining and looks 'the bomb'.

WARIO WORLD
Not that tough to beat, admittedly, but still bags of fun.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES





MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching crashes.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Even better than the last *CDS*, but again very brown and set during the first Gulf war. There's a new aspect to this one: you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of life-saving heroics and more opportunity for you to 'get to know' your squad members.

26 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade). The only real difference is, it's now in 3D, which will affect your strategies. For the better. A multiplayer blast.

27 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… Let's just say you'll be glad your mind has gone. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but it's nearly perfect otherwise.

28 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

An obscure Zelda game that's hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing, and would've scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version, Tetra's Trackers, hadn't been chopped out.

29 RESIDENT EVIL — 89

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

30 SPLINTER CELL — 89

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/81

Ageing special agent Sam Fisher's first outing. Sam stealths his way around the realistically gritty Clanciverse. Only he and his various high-tech, highly improbably gadgets like sticky bombs and camera disruptors stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's your usual silent-man-takes-on-bad-guys fare, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish. Not a great port, but a good game nonetheless.

31 SSX 3 — 89

EA ■ NGC/87

Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The frame rate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

32 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer's worth the expense.

33 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting's a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that.

34 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough – but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

35 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. That apart, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

36 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
ATARI ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ballgames like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

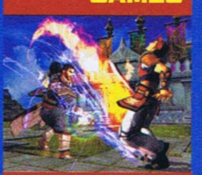
37 NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
You don't need a serious basketball sim – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats are really vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street's* got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves, all crammed into a fast-moving game.

38 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best Star Wars game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

39 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change in this bitterly tough latest instalment in the franchise is Hit Stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and Franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual for Madden.

40 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87
MAJESCO ■ NGC/82
All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Starting as a mere rookie, fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, and play the part of your girlfriend as she catfights with other lissome lovelies. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from fight kings Namco.

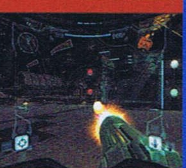
SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types pounding each other's faces in.

VIEWTIFUL JOE
The only one-player beat-'em-up in our top five. Stunning.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

MK DEADLY ALLIANCE
"Mind if I remove your spleen?" "Ooh, go on – finish me."

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

TIME-SPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and lacks the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel.

XIII
Euro-shooter with comic-book looks and very serious violence.

IKARUGA
A pure arcade shooter that's tougher than most.

41 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but is such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds and stunts, a range of locations… Come on, this is Tony Hawk. Before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…



42 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Lovely looking card-based RPG – not quite up to *Phantasy Star 1&2's* standards, they're still the RPG benchmark, but statophiles are going to love building their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers.

Essentially *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a string of bite-sized gaming morsels that you can chomp away at at will, putting the game down and returning to it later with ease.

43 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful-looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning, and the speech and effects make the grade too. Even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but the slightly easy difficulty means it won't last as long as you'd like.

44 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players – but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared 'air bubble' can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

45 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N)! The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

46 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
Absolutely killer racer in its day that was improved on massively by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth frame rate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2* because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

47 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese, platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

48 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could've come up with a real-time-strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth was a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. And it looked as wonderful as it played. Just too short.

49 XIII 86
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/88
Unusual graphics – cel shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam') set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace as you set about solving the conspiracy and recovering your memory.

50 NFL 2K3 86
ATARI ■ NGC/79
Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing effectively together. However, the enormous Franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American Football, if a tad out-of-date.

51 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86
EA ■ NGC/87
Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (most notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

52 NBA LIVE 2004 86
EA ■ NGC/88
Under the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats and facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved, and you've more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

53 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85
CAPCOM ■ NGC/78
Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Fab cut-scenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old Resi atmosphere. A coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere…

54 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85
NINTENDO ■ NGC/95
For a Mario game, there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses. It's just not as whacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

55 IKARUGA 85
ATARI ■ NGC/80
Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the Easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

56 FIFA FOOTBALL 2004 85
EA ■ NGC/87
The best footie sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players and licensed teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and corner-taking's menu-driven. So, a single game or a whole career? It's all here.

DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!

57 EXTREME G3 — 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

An underrated gem, this. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed, and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons you acquire. The only down side is that it's a bit soulless. The multiplayer's also nowhere near as good as it could – or should – have been.



SPIDER-MAN 2 — 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed, and some of the quests and missions get samey, but still… that swinging!



JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH — 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Mega City One comes to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life, but while it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself, solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on. Apart from the length, the fiddly controls are the other letdown.



POKÉMON COLOSSEUM — 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters! Aww. Really, though, it's an awful lot of fighting, and you'll need a GBA Pokémon title to get the most out of the Colosseum mode.



TALES OF SYMPHONIA — 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

A 'traditional' RPG, and good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the specific locations you enter throughout the adventure are stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate, though.



RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC — 84

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman manages to create a fun platformer, despite his inability to add anything new to the genre. It's bright, it's solid, and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right. When you've played all the Mario you can handle, give Ray a go.



ISS2 — 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

Once upon a time, this series was untouchable, but the FIFA games have ramped up their quality while the GC *ISS* seemed much slower than its predecessors and your players had huge turning circles. *ISS2* is a great game, but we expected so much more of it. However, it's MUCH better than *ISS3*.



ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE — 83

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/88

Star Wars is about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. So, whether you're playing Luke Skywalker's storyline or Wedge Antilles', the on-foot sections ruin the rest. Which is a shame, because it looks and sounds near-perfect, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.



SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER — 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

66 FREEDOM FIGHTERS — 83

IO ■ NGC/86

Less serious than the *Desert Storm* series, this squad-based third-person shooter is nonetheless hugely enjoyable and involves a decent degree of strategy. Forget rubbish like bullet trajectories and get your plumber and his team out on the streets of Noo Yoik to take on the invading Russians.

67 TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND 2 — 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

Tony Hawk rumbles on. This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with timer!

68



SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82

ATARI ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: when they're out of balls, monkeys want you dead, preferably messily. And they probably carry guns. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!) the little hairy creatures are a delight. And much safer. *Super Monkey Ball 2* offers you a wide array of minigames and over 100 levels to roll your imprisoned simian around, with progressive difficulty and guaranteed fun.

69 METAL ARMS GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

Hard – like Ray Winstone in a steel top hat. This robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick. The camera can be awkward, and landscape hazards (eg water is instantly fatal) can be unfairly harsh.

70 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III CARD REV. — 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

A new idea for PSO – card-based battling. Following on from the events in *PSO 1&2*, you now have to choose a side (Arkz or Heroside) and do battle by rolling dice and selecting cards. You really need to be familiar with PSO to get the most out of it, and you'll also require an elusive broadband adaptor…

71 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT — 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent their previous game imprisoned within the four walls of their home, this one sees your virtual people playthings freed from their luxury prison as you send them out to work. It's still rather ugly, and it doesn't sound too great, but it will last you a very long time.

72 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA OOT MASTER QUEST — 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

Free with *Wind Waker*! You may have played this beauty back in the days of the N64 version, and it still looks pretty much the same, although the Master Quest version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles. Forget the ropy graphics and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own Gamecube itself.

METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure. Again.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

LOST KINGDOMS II
Polished RPG with card collecting elements. Neat.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the *'Splitters 2* team.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Another Nintendo exclusive that never fails to entertain.

SPLINTER CELL
Captivating stealth-laced adventure from the hand of Tom Clancy.

73 AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72

Top-class roller skating sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means you can pull off moves like swinging round lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are bland. Still, the frame rate is smooth.

74 THE SIMS — 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Life, Jim, but not as we know it. Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would – leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. Like *Animal Crossing*, there's no point to it, but that's life for you: meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

75 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE — 81

EA ■ NGC/76

Four authentic race seasons in one tidy package! Makes a difference from that 'yearly update' malarkey, eh? What's more, the first year's is 1999, when Ferrari weren't guaranteed to win everything. It's a good, sensible, deep Formula 1 sim. The down side is, it's not exactly a barrel of laughs…

76 PAC-MAN VS — 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free – but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't a complex title, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between 'serious' gaming sessions. You'll need a Game Boy and link cable to play it properly.

77 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY — 80

EA ■ NGC/99

More fighting style/ More stylin' fight/ If only they'd/ Got the frame rate right.
Yes, this is actually much better than *Def Jam Vendetta*, with a great fighting system and brilliant have-a-go crowds, but the jerkiness (graphical scratching..?) ruins it.

78 NHL 2005 — 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Plays a slick, quick game of hockey that'll restore the faith of anyone who invested in last year's sluggish, jerky version.

If you genuinely dislike the sport, you won't be convinced by this. If you're unfamiliar with it, ice hockey works well enough as a videogame to hurdle a few transatlantic sporting barriers – it's quick, easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores if you're good enough.

79 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier MKs, although it's far too easy to get an 'infinite' by button mashing. The lack of ring outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

80 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

A traditional RPG (no card-selecting) based on a long-established PC series. Endlessly battling goblins and their ilk can get tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. Technically, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery frame rate when the screen is full.



81 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/87

After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the Grand Theft Auto series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. There are even racing and item-locating side missions to undertake. Original it most definitely isn't, but it is one of the funniest games on Gamecube. As long as you don't expect a great deal of depth, you'll have fun with this.

82 MARIO PARTY 5 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

Ain't no party like a Mario Party. Except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The boardgame bits are a little slow and dull, but the minigames – popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights – are hilarious.

83 DIE HARD VENDETTA 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people. We're sure The Vest never swore quite like this. However, he did enjoy a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections. Yippee-kay-ay, melon farmer.

84 POOL PARADISE 80

IGNITION ■ NGC/92

Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too, if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

85 PUYO POP FEVER 80

SEGA ■ NGC/91

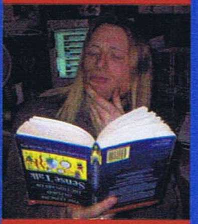
Puyo Pop: if you've never heard of it, you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? Two-player's a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

86 NFL STREET 79

EA ■ NGC/90

American Football isn't quite brought to the masses by *NFL Street*. Even though the strategy's dumbed down it's still very stoppy-starty and so can be slightly drawn-out. We'd also have liked a custom play editor or a whacky training mode to help players get to grips with the basic plays.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



MASTICATION
If you ate pasta and antipasta in the same meal, would you still be hungry afterwards?

THINK, THEN SPEAK
A closed mouth gathers no feet.

PLUG
You wanna go live in Frome mate, everyone knows it's the centre of the universe, well, next to Wanstrow anyway.

POSH CARS
Want to own a posh, expensive car? Well here's the plan, tell all your friends not to look at 'em, not even a glance… ever. This will anger the attention-hungry owners of these prestigious vehicles, thus reducing the perceived, and therefore financial value, consequently allowing everyone to afford one, result! - mine's a Porka, cheers…

READER SENSE
Why do only desk chairs with wheels on move up and down and turn around. What do they have that other chairs don't?
Paul Richards Walmley
(*Er, wheels?* – PE)

Do you have more 'sense' than our Sense-spewing Art monkey? More than likely! So go on, send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a plum tomato, in an old sock.

Send them to him at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN 79

EA ■ NGC/95

A Potter title that actually works pretty well as a game! Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a (we're being kind here) rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.

88 BEACH SPIKERS 79

ATARI ■ NGC/72

Not to everyone's taste – although developers AM2 have at least abandoned the 'jigglies' and concentrated on making a proper sports sim. You'll need lightning-quick reactions and good team control to succeed. Its single-player appeal is limited, so you'll need to play with friends to get the most from it.

89 CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO 79

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Enormous depth and an avalanche of play modes give the game longevity – Versus mode will last you for ages – but it doesn't work well with the GC's joypad (specials on the C-stick? Cheapness abounds!) and so you'll really need to shell out for an arcade stick. It's pretty ugly too.

90 DAKAR 2 79

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

Two problems with this: it's basically one big time trial (and you can find a Time Trial mode in any racing game) and there aren't any real opponents. The handling of your vehicle and the varied courses between Paris and Dakar make up for it. A fun drive, just not a very competitive one.

91 NBA COURTSIDE 2002 79

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

There's a wealth of basketball games available for your Gamecube, and this is far from the worst, with all the passing, dunking and other ball-based moves you could ask for. However, it's not the best or most recent either. *NBA Street V2* or *NBA Live 2004* would be our preferred choices.

92 NHL HITZ 20-02 79

MIDWAY ■ NGC/67

Ice hockey's probably the most Brit-friendly of North American sports – no slowing down, fewer strange-seeming terms to get used to – and this is a fast, slick game. *NHL 2005* is more recent and slightly better, but if you can't get that, *NHL Hitz 20-02* is going to be your next best ice hockey option.

93 KNOCKOUT KINGS 2003 79

EA ■ NGC/75

Decent boxer. Slightly better than – and very different from – *Rocky*. The camera's really dynamic, and the control system can feel disorientating at first. There are plenty of modes, and you can build your own boxer to punch his way through Career mode. Looks rather nice, too.

94 SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW 78

UBI SOFT ■ NGC/97

Sam Fisher returns for more spying, sniping and skulking around in the dark – but his first adventure was far superior. The quality of the conversion's not great and some serious gameplay flaws from the Xbox original haven't been addressed, but we kept coming back. Until the glitchy last level, anyway.

95 HARRY POTTER & THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS 78

EA ■ NGC/76

A competent and attractive adaptation of the second film, but not too challenging either. Experienced gamers will be flinging spells around and getting through it in no time, so Harry's basilisk-locating escapade is best left for Potter fans or the very young. Better than *Philosopher's Stone*, though…

96 ROCKY 78

RAGE ■ NGC/74

Five Rockies for the price of one as you fight your way through all the films, complete with all the great opponents. Are you ready to take on Mr T, fool? Then this solid fighter will let you do it. It's not exactly imaginative, but there's plenty to unlock and the two-player's good fun.

97 EVOLUTION SKATEBOARDING 78

KONAMI ■ NGC/79

This snazzy-looking Tony Hawk's clone should keep you happy, but it's a bit like going to see an Elvis impersonator when the King's in town: while the real thing's available and is of a higher quality, that's what you're best off with. Happily, unlike Tone's later excursions, this features no walking or driving.

98 SMUGGLER'S RUN WARZONES 78

ROCKSTAR ■ NGC/73

The landscapes are absolutely enormous, so you'll have great fun roaring around them in your buggy, avoiding the Law, who wants to put your illegal trading out of action. Unfortunately, the repetitive gameplay and awful music are more likely to teach you the error of your ways.

99 P.N.03 77

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

A super-stylish shooter featuring a dancing heroine who pulls off all sorts of slick moves. Not being able to move and shoot at the same time proves awkward, and the repetitiveness and bleak design don't do the game any favours. It's for you if you *really* enjoy shooting robots.

100 ROBOTECH BATTLECRY 77

TDK ■ NGC/77

Games about stompy robots always let us down in some way. In this case, it's a little too repetitive and boils down to locating red dots on your radar and blasting at them. Nonetheless, it's true to the anime and the story scenes are terrific, despite the cringeworthy voice acting.





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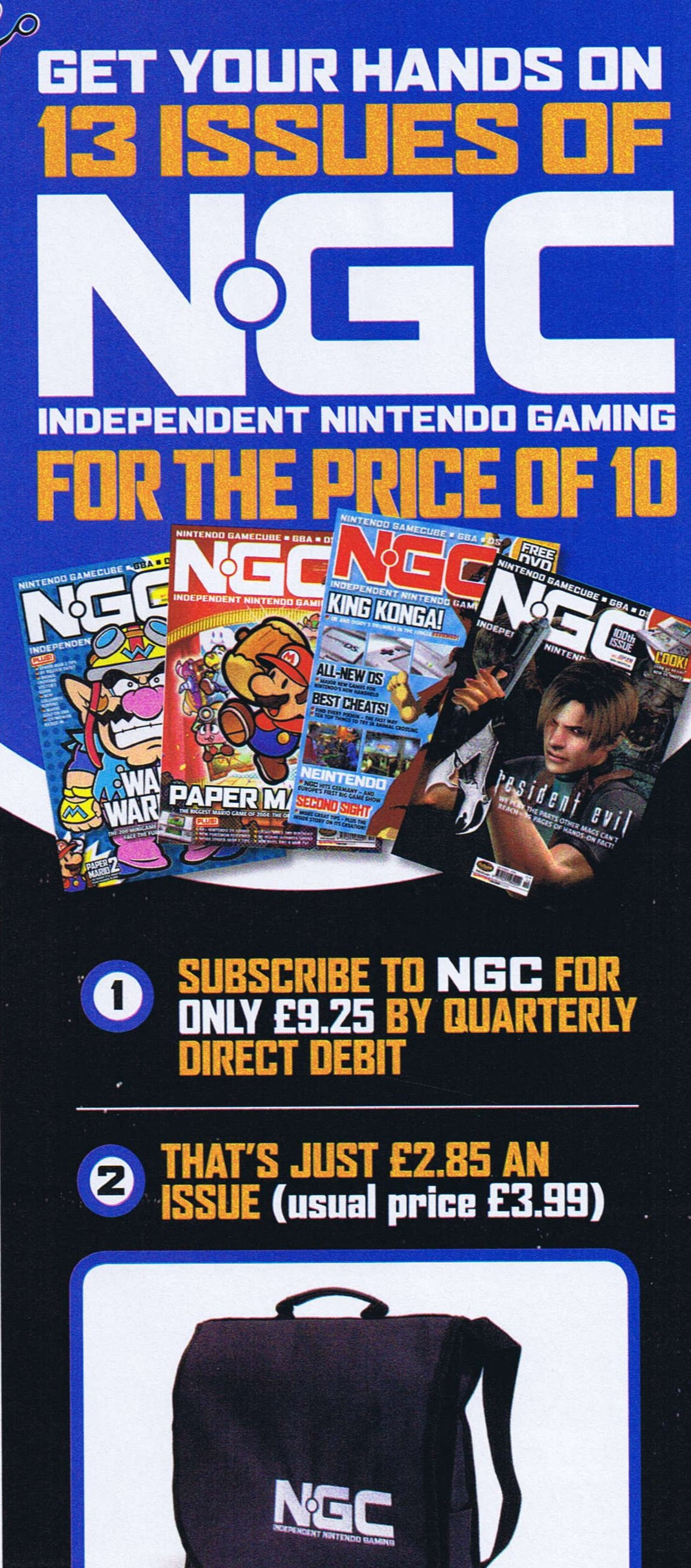
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